Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd t/a City of London College

September 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd trading as City of London College. The review took place from 29 to 30 September 2015 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Millard Parkinson
- Ms Deborah Trayhurn
- Professor Anthony Whitehouse
- Mr Ioannis Soilemetzidis (student reviewer)

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

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

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

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing City of London 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 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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 7.

As part of the Higher Education Review (AP), the team investigated a Concern that was submitted to the QAA's Concern Scheme shortly before the review visit as well as considering progress against the College's action plan following a full investigation under QAA's Concerns process in March 2015. The College continues work to complete the action plan. Further information relating to the outcomes associated with the Concern can be found on QAA's website.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd t/a City of London College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd trading as City of London College (the College).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation **does not meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the provider's information about learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd trading as City of London College.

By January 2016:

- revise the committee structure to ensure more effective oversight of academic standards and quality, and adopt a more reflective approach to the management and development of higher education provision (Expectations A3.1, A3.2, A3.3, B1, and B3)
- analyse the academic performance of students based on their entry qualifications to assess the effectiveness of its admissions decisions (Expectation B2)
- implement a clear process for investigation of suspected academic misconduct in line with awarding organisation guidelines and ensure that all investigations are formally recorded and reported to awarding organisations (Expectation B4)
- ensure that student assessment feedback is timely (Expectation B6)
- develop and implement formal progression requirements and record details of student performance progression and achievement of awards (Expectation B6)
- ensure that processes for internal verification of assessment tasks, and internal verification/modification of marking, are implemented consistently and effectively, and routinely monitored (Expectation B6)
- ensure that students are fully informed of the external examiner systems and make all external examiner reports available to students in full (Expectation B7)
- ensure that internal quality assurance systems enable the Academic Board and senior managers to discharge consistently their responsibilities for academic oversight across all higher education provision (Expectations B8, A3.3 and Enhancement)
- ensure that handbooks are prepared in a timely manner for all programmes and include essential information for the teaching and learning process (Expectations C and A2.2).

By March 2016:

- ensure appropriate governance arrangements are implemented to secure academic oversight and enable the College to meet its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards (Expectations A2.1, and A1)
- introduce a clear model of learning resource planning and review (Expectation B4)
- ensure that personal tutor systems are further developed and implemented with clear oversight to ensure consistency of support practices (Expectation B4)
- ensure effective representation and regular monitoring of the collective student voice at all levels of the organisational structure (Expectation B5)
- ensure effective processes for the systematic consideration of external examiner reports and action plans (Expectation B7)
- develop and communicate an overarching complaints and appeals process, to be included in the student handbook (Expectation B9)
- ensure the infrastructure for the effective oversight of employability and work-based learning activity is in place before programmes commence (Expectation B10)
- develop and implement a strategy for the enhancement of student learning opportunities in order to ensure that it is deliberate and systematic; and embed this strategy at all levels of the College (Enhancement).

By June 2016:

- ensure that assessment design meets the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy (Expectation B6).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action that the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd trading as City of London College is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The actions being taken by the College to implement a consistent method of recording student attendance and regular reporting and monitoring by the Quality and Standards Committee (Expectation B4).

Theme: Student Employability

The College is at an early stage of developing its employability approaches and is aiming to ensure that employability skills are a feature of all its programmes through a number of approaches: work-settings, employer involvement in preparing students for placement, and provision of a practitioner accreditation for the Health and Social Care students.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at the College during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd t/a City of London College

The College was established in London in 1979 and is a long-established provider of education and training. In 2011, it received the Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of its long-standing contribution to international education in the UK. The College holds 'Premier College' status from the Accreditation Service for International Students. It is a privately owned company financed through its shareholders.

The mission of the College is threefold: to facilitate students' access to good quality, yet reasonably priced, education in the UK; to create a learning environment which will support students' personal development and enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and the appropriate skills, including interpersonal ones, which will lead to qualifications relevant to their future employment and career development; and through the success of the College's graduates, to help contribute to the well-being of the enterprises they work for and the economies of their countries of origin. The College aims to achieve this by valuing, and developing to the full, the contribution of its staff, working closely with students, and providing training and learning opportunities for students and staff.

The College is a recognised centre for Pearson qualifications. Following the University of Wales' decision to restructure its relationships with providers that offered its awards, the College has established a new partnership with Buckinghamshire New University and will start delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes under a franchise agreement in October 2015.

The College is currently located in temporary accommodation until early 2016 on Commercial Road while its building on Backchurch Lane is being refurbished.

There are currently 491 students registered on Pearson BTEC programmes. From September 2015, the College is discontinuing its offer of Pearson programmes and recruiting to six bachelor with honours programmes, a foundation degree in health and social care, and an International MBA.

The College was first reviewed by QAA in 2012 for educational oversight and subject to annual monitoring in 2013 and 2014, and made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the 2012 review.

The College was then investigated under QAA's Concerns Scheme in March 2015 after QAA received anonymous allegations about academic malpractice. The outcome of the investigation was published on the QAA website in June 2015. Reference is made to the Concern at appropriate points in the report, particularly in Expectations A2.2, A3.4, B2, B3, B4, B6 and C. The investigation concluded that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that there was any systematic academic misconduct at the College in relation to the allegations. However, in light of the investigations a number of deficiencies were identified in the College's management of higher education and the investigating team made a number of recommendations. The College was then required to prepare and publish an action plan to set out how these weaknesses were to be addressed. In order to progress and monitor implementation of the action plan the College established a Task and Finish Group comprising senior staff of the College, with regular meetings. While no minutes were provided, a calendar of meetings indicated actions taken and completed.

Explanation of the findings about the Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd t/a City of London 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 other awarding organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The College offers programmes developed by Pearson and is an approved centre. The College relies upon the awarding organisation to make reference to relevant frameworks such as the *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (*FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements in setting standards.

1.2   In February 2015, the College was approved to run a suite of programmes franchised from Buckinghamshire New University. Designation of the programmes on offer was agreed in September 2015 and the College is recruiting to these for an immediate start. As the awarding body, Buckinghamshire New University retains ultimate responsibility for setting standards, informed by the FHEQ and other reference points for academic standards in Part A of the Quality Code. The College's contract with the University indicates its responsibilities in delivering these franchised programmes. These are to deliver programmes to the standards set by national benchmarking institutions recognised in the UK and concerned with quality assurance of higher education, including the Quality Code. Delivery responsibilities anticipated at the College are outlined in an Operations Manual which is yet to be customised and signed by College staff.

1.3   Individual modules from the University's Foundation Degree Integrated Health and Social Care are mapped to the Health and Social Care National Occupational Standards

owned jointly by the Alliance Skills for Care and Development and Skills for Health sector bodies. No professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) reference points inform the Pearson programmes directly.

1.4   In principle, meeting the requirements of the University enables the College to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to Expectation A1.

1.5   The review team tested the College's approach to the implementation of its responsibilities by examining documentation outlining College practices and approaches to programme development in the Quality Assurance Handbook, examples of design, approval and review activity, and programme specifications. The team held meetings with staff, students and an employer.

1.6   While the Academic Board is stated to oversee all matters relating to the delivery and development of all courses and academic work undertaken by the College, no records were found establishing its oversight and consideration of the delivery of the Buckinghamshire New University franchise arrangements. At the time of the review visit, the team was told that arrangements for oversight of the delivery had not been set even though recruitment activity was underway. However, a meeting to discuss these matters was imminent. This finding contribute to the team's recommendation under Expectation A2.1.

1.7   On the basis that the awarding body and organisation are ultimately responsible for securing the academic standards of their awards, the team concludes that the expectation is met. However, the risk is moderate as no oversight arrangements are yet in place for the delivery of programmes to assure effective academic oversight. This risk contributes to a recommendation in Expectation A2.1.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.8   Governance arrangements for franchised programmes are intended to be managed by the University with the College responsible for programme delivery to the standards set out by recognised reference points, including the Quality Code. For Pearson BTEC programmes the College uses the regulations provided by Pearson. Terms of reference statements for governance arrangements indicate that to secure standards the College's Academic Board keeps under review the requirements for the academic awards conferred by the College, including an overview of the academic regulations for all taught courses. The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for managing assessment and operating internal examination boards for Pearson awards. The Board receives reports, considers summary reports on periodic review, validations, annual monitoring and external examiner reports, initiating action as necessary.

1.9   The College seeks to actively maintain academic standards through its committee structures, associated delegated authority, annual monitoring and reporting, and external examiner responsibilities. These structures and their associated processes enable the College to meet Expectation 2.1 in principle.

1.10   As the University programmes have not yet begun, the review team tested the College's implementation of its responsibilities for Pearson programmes. This included reviewing documentation such as Academic Board's terms of reference, minutes of the Academic Board, minutes of examination boards, standards verifier reports and annual monitoring reports (AMRs), and meeting with staff and students.

1.11   Pearson standards verifiers confirm that assessment and internal exam boards are held. The review team was informed that these boards report to the Academic Board's Quality and Standards Subcommittee. However, the team found that structures to oversee assessment decision-making by the Academic Board are not included in College documentation and frequency requirements for meetings are not provided. One Academic Board was held across years 2014 and 2015. There is no indication of the College having considered student performance at Academic Board, though it is considered at individual exam boards. The Academic Board reports to the College Senior Management Team (SMT) though the review team was informed that new senior staff appointments are awaited. The College has recently reviewed its governance arrangements, including the articles of governance, and revised its procedures which were provided to the team in draft. These have yet to be implemented. The review team **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College ensures appropriate governance arrangements are implemented to secure academic oversight and enable the College to meet its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards.

1.12   Overall, the governance structures are not clearly stated and not fully and regularly operated at the College. While ultimate responsibility for academic standards lies with the awarding body/organisation, the College has some responsibility for the oversight and maintenance of academic standards with regard to its delivery of the programmes. The team concludes that academic standards are not secure at the College and recommends that the College puts in place governance arrangements to secure academic oversight for all

programmes. The team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the risk is serious and represents significant gaps in the College's quality assurance arrangements.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Serious

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   Buckinghamshire New University is responsible, as the awarding body, for keeping definitive records of the programmes it franchises. For its Higher National programmes, the College is responsible for producing contextualised programme specifications based on the Pearson unit and award specifications. In both cases, the College is responsible for making these available to students and ensuring they are used as a reference point for the delivery of programmes, and for Higher National programmes as a reference point for assessment.

1.14   In order to test this Expectation, the review team reviewed a self-evaluation document submitted by the College for this review, programme specifications for the awarding body, information for students, and information for staff, and discussed the use and availability of programme specifications with staff and students, and the management of programme information with senior staff.

1.15   Programme handbooks for Buckinghamshire New University programmes contain accurate information on the details of delivery and duration of study which is in line with validation documents. The University requires the College to produce student programme handbooks to reflect local delivery of its programmes, which at the time of the review were not available, even though the first intake of students begins in October 2015. BTEC specifications are made available to both staff and students.

1.16   College handbooks provided for Pearson programmes are generic with no programme-specific information such as the course structure, modules to be studied, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. While staff and students confirmed that no College-particular programme specifications were available for Pearson programmes, the College states that programme specific information, including module specifications, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each course, are made available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). This information was not seen by the review team. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation under Expectation C.

1.17   The Expectation is met, as definitive records of each programme are maintained by the awarding bodies. The associated risk is moderate, however, reflecting the need for the College to provide timely and consistent programme information for Pearson programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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   The College does not have a specific programme approval process. Programmes of study offered by the College are provided by bodies responsible for making the award. Module content and programme structure is decided by the awarding partner. Each programme is subject to the respective awarding body and awarding organisation validation and centre approval process. These processes are responsible for confirming that programmes are designed to meet threshold academic standards, including the standards specified in the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, and their internal framework requirements.

1.19   The alignment of learning outcomes to the relevant descriptors are the responsibility of the awarding partner, and assessment schemes for degree programmes are the responsibility of the University. Assessment schemes for Pearson programmes are internally verified and also subject to scrutiny by external examiners appointed by Pearson.

1.20   The College is responsible for developing processes and documentation to ensure that the management and delivery of programmes meet the awarding partners' requirements for the awards. Awarding partners are responsible for provision of programmes and this would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.21   In testing this Expectation, the team reviewed the self-evaluation document; associated evidence; considered agreements with awarding partners; programme documentation; and minutes of Academic Board, the Courses Review Committee and of the Quality and Standards Committee. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.22   Programme planning and approval procedures are not evident. Staff confirmed that the College management identifies programmes of study required to meet market demand and then selects the programmes from an awarding partner. Units on Pearson programmes were selected to map to relevant honours degree top-up programmes. Academic staff confirmed that they had some involvement in the choice of academic programmes to be offered. At meetings with the review team, the SMT confirmed they dealt with the process for the selection and approval of programmes to be delivered with selected awarding partners, though there was no evidence of formal deliberation about the selection of units, for example through the Academic Board.

1.23   The review of systems and procedures for the internal approval of new programmes and collaborations is the responsibility of the Academic Board. Minutes of meetings supplied to the review team do not demonstrate that this responsibility was discharged.

1.24   All degree programmes to be delivered by the College, from October 2015, will be provided by a new partnership established with a single university partner. An academic agreement and a draft operations manual, which details College and University staff responsibilities, will be used to direct the process. Evidence of the implementation and operation of systems and processes for the new University partner are not yet available.

1.25   As each programme is subject to the respective awarding partner's validation and centre approval process, the Expectation is met. The College is responsible for selecting units to make up the Higher National programmes of study; however, there is no consistent and College-wide approach taken to the internal selection and approval of each taught programme. As a consequence, the team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College revises the committee structure to ensure more effective oversight of academic standards and quality, and adopt a more reflective approach to the management and development of higher education provision. The level of associated risk is moderate, reflecting gaps in procedures and weaknesses in the operation of existing procedures for the internal approval of programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.26   The College delivers programmes in accordance with its formal agreements with its awarding partners.

1.27   Internal verification and moderation issues have been raised by external examiners for Pearson awards and on reflection the College identified the need for further training. An external consultant was appointed to retrain staff to understand and apply the Pearson internal verification process.

1.28   The College confirmed that it follows the Pearson process for internal verification to ensure that assessments are fit for purpose before being issued to students. Annual assessment plans are produced to coordinate internal verification and assessment dates.

1.29   For the University awards, all assessments will be provided, with first marking carried out by the College and then moderated by the University. At the time of the review visit, the College was still contextualising the draft operations manual supplied by the University. For a previous university partner the College provided draft assessments to the university for moderation; the university then sent these to its appointed external examiner for approval.

1.30   The external quality assurance procedures in place would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.31   In testing the Expectation, the review team considered awarding body agreements and regulations, College documentation on assessment, external examiner reports, assessment briefs and College responses to external examiner reports. For Pearson programmes, the team looked at samples of graded assessments. The team also met teaching staff with responsibility for the operation of assessment.

1.32   Teaching staff understand the process of assessment of their units, and that both new and part-time staff have specific mentoring to support their understanding of the assessment process.

1.33   For Pearson HND programmes, all assessments are set by the College and there is an annual plan of assessment. Assignment briefs consulted by the review team indicated that, with action now taken on comments made by external examiners, the assessment criteria and grade descriptors were designed to assess grade achievement against the relevant learning outcomes.

1.34   Monitoring and external examiner reports from previous university partners identified that the College had followed their procedures. The new University partner holds

responsibility for the provision and moderation of all assessment, in line with its own regulations.

1.35   The College Academic Board holds responsibility for the management of examination boards; however, minutes of meetings supplied to the team do not demonstrate that minutes of internal examination boards are considered. Senior staff confirmed that internal examination boards are considered by the College to be meetings of the Academic Board. While internal systems exist, the Academic Board does not appear to meet regularly or follow its own terms of reference. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation under Expectation B8 regarding the revision of the committee structure to ensure more effective oversight of academic standards and quality.

1.36   Programmes delivered under an agreement with Buckinghamshire New University commence in October 2015 and therefore evidence of the achievement of relevant learning outcomes and the standards of academic assessment are not yet available.

1.37   The team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low, on the basis that assessment is monitored by the awarding partner who appoints external examiners to ensure both UK threshold standards and its own academic standards have been satisfied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.38   A College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook sets out the processes for monitoring and review of its programmes and the College regards the annual monitoring of its programmes as an essential element of its quality assurance procedures. The College states it is committed to a policy of continuous quality improvement. Its procedures require the production of AMRs by each programme director.

1.39   For all degree programmes delivered from October 2015, the College will be required to contribute to the quality assurance process, through an annual review of effective delivery. The awarding body provides an operations manual which specifies a calendar of meetings and sets out roles and responsibilities for both University and College staff. For previous University partner programmes, joint boards of study and some annual reviews were required. The process overseen by awarding partners would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.40   The review team considered the College's approach to course monitoring and review by talking to senior staff, teaching staff and students. The team also scrutinised documentation supplied, including Quality Assurance Committee and College Course Review Committee minutes, which indicate that operational issues are discussed. Monitoring and review reports produced by awarding partners were also considered by the team.

1.41   Terms of reference for Academic Board require the Board to manage assessment and internal exam boards and to receive annual summary reports on periodic review, validations and annual monitoring. While procedures are in place, minutes of Academic Board provided to the review team confirm that such matters are not routinely considered Full performance details are contained in minutes for one programme on one occasion. Staff stated that internal examination boards are considered to be part of Academic Board. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation in Expectation A3.1 regarding the revision of the committee structure to ensure more effective oversight of academic standards and quality.

1.42   The Quality and Standards Committee, which reports to the Academic Board, is responsible for receiving reports from external examiners, annual monitoring review reports and for ensuring that actions are taken and to prepare outline papers for discussion at Academic Board. Scrutiny of the minutes shows that reporting takes place but with little evidence of academic discussion, evaluative commentary, or of plans to enhance learning opportunities across the higher education provision. For example, apart from two meetings, minutes do not indicate that members see actual copies of external examiner reports or the action plans arising. At some meetings the Director of Quality Assurance was tasked with analysing external examiner reports and producing an action plan; there is no evidence that other committee members were involved. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation in Expectation B8 to ensure effective internal quality assurance systems.

1.43   For Pearson programmes, the College provides evidence that threshold academic standards are maintained through internal moderation processes, which are subject to verification by the Pearson-appointed external examiner during their annual visits.

1.44   Monitoring and review of provision by previous university partners required annual reviews to be carried out by the College. The University of Wales carried out moderation and annual reviews that indicated satisfaction with the College. For Birmingham City University programmes, AMRs produced by the University identified some student progression issues which were addressed by the College.

1.45   For degree programmes delivered from October 2015, the new awarding body requires an annual review of the effective delivery of its programmes.

1.46   The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that, overall, the College is operating in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners in managing its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing its higher education programmes. Awarding partners ensure that academic standards are being achieved.

1.47   In terms of its own procedures, the College does not produce programme-specific, or College-wide annual monitoring reviews as specified in its procedures. At meetings with staff the College confirmed that it only produced module reviews and also supplied data to awarding partners to enable the partner to produce annual monitoring reviews.

1.48   Overall, the team concludes that the Expectation is met but the associated level of risk is moderate. The risk relates to two recommendations, one under Expectation A3.1 and the other under Expectation B8, reflecting a lack of adherence by the College to the operation of its academic governance structure and shortcomings in the application of its quality assurance procedures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.49   The College relies on awarding body procedures to ensure external and independent review practice when designing, developing and approving new programmes. Pearson programmes are developed with core and specialist units available for providers to select. The College does not operate any own-designed units. The College's Director of Quality Assurance determines approaches and scrutiny arrangements, including validation of proposed new provision, based on information provided.

1.50   Standards verifiers are appointed by Pearson to review assessment and make judgements to confirm that standards reached meet national standards. The University provides external examiners to confirm that the required standards are met and maintained. Following the University's requirements would enable the College to meet Expectation A3.4 in design.

1.51   The College is making some links with external practitioners and is building effective relationships with a Health and Social Care sector employer; arrangements are at an early stage to support programmes which are intended to start in October 2015.

1.52   The team found that College-wide approaches and documentation of external and independent expertise are not well established, however, the College has no responsibility for development of curriculum so the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.53   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.54   Of the seven expectations in this area, six are met. Two of these six expectations carry a low risk while four have moderate risks relating to lack of effective oversight of academic standards in respect of the delivery of programmes, limited understanding of its responsibilities for quality assurance, and gaps in procedure and weaknesses in the operation of procedures for securing academic standards.

1.55   In aggregate, the review team has made six recommendations related in whole or in part to this judgement area.

1.56   Expectation A2.1 is not met and carries a serious risk. The review team makes one recommendation against this Expectation, which represents significant gaps in the College's quality assurance arrangements. The team found that structures to manage assessment decision-making are not included in College documentation and student performance has not been considered by Academic Board which carries responsibility for managing assessment and internal exam boards. The team concludes that awards are not fully secured at the College.

1.57   Overall, the review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding body and organisation **does not 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 The structure and content of University programmes delivered by the College is determined by its awarding partner who holds ultimate responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes. At the time of the review visit it was difficult for the team to establish the exact responsibilities of the College under this Expectation as these had yet to be discussed with the University.

2.2 A formal agreement was signed in February 2015 for an initial term of six years. Pearson centre approval was obtained in 2006 for a number of programmes. Awarding partners are responsible through documented processes for ensuring that academic standards are maintained and the quality of learning opportunities assured.

2.3 According to the terms of reference of the Academic Board, the purpose of the Board includes overseeing all matters relating to development of all courses and has the responsibility to review systems and procedures for the validation of new courses and collaborations. The College, however, does not have a specific procedure for the selection and approval of programmes and there is no evidence in minutes of Academic Board of this process. Therefore, there is no evidence that the College has effective processes for considering the planning of resources and implementation of programmes prior to delivery.

2.4 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining a range of documentation, including partnership agreements, minutes and terms of reference of academic committees and meetings. The team also held meetings with the Director of Academic Affairs, senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.5 The selection of the awarding body and of the programmes was taken by SMT. Staff confirmed that College management identify programmes of study on the basis of market demand and then selects programmes from an awarding partner, and that they had some limited involvement in the selection of programmes to be offered. Units on Pearson programmes were selected to map to relevant honours top-up year programmes. There was no evidence of formal deliberation about the selection of units. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation made under Expectation A3.1.

2.6 Overall, the review team concludes that the ultimate responsibility for the approval of programmes lies with the College's awarding partners and the Expectation is met; however, the level of risk is moderate reflecting weaknesses in the operation of procedures for the consideration of resources and planning the delivery of programmes

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.7   Under the current agreement with Buckinghamshire New University, the University is responsible for handling student enquiries, general promotion of the programmes and assessing students' suitability for admission to the programmes in accordance with its own admissions criteria. The agreement does not permit the recruitment of international students. The College is responsible for marketing activities, handling prospective student enquiries, enrolling students and registering students with the University, as well as providing induction to the relevant programme.

2.8   From September 2015 all applications to programmes will be made through the University and Colleges Admissions Service, UCAS.

2.9   The College has a Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy which makes reference to the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education* and outlines the processes for selection, including checking of qualifications. The policy allows applicants to request deferred entry for a maximum of one year.

2.10   Application forms are reviewed for completeness and, together with supporting evidence, assessed against entry requirements. Applications are then considered by the Admissions Committee comprising the Academic Director, Operations Manager, Admissions Officer and Programme Directors. All applications are sent to the University, which will produce admission letters to be sent out by the College.

2.11   The review team considered that the design of the process would enable Expectation B2 to be met.

2.12   The review team tested the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions through meetings with staff responsible for admissions, professional support staff, and students. The team also reviewed various College documents relating to admissions, including the Operations Manual, entrance tests, the Admissions Committee, information for students on learning difficulties and equal opportunities. Part of the scrutiny included examining evidence of progress against two recommendations from the Concerns report against this Expectation.

2.13   One of the recommendations of the Concerns report was for the College to ensure that all testing of students prior to admission is at a level appropriate for entry to higher education study. The team found that the College has reviewed the entry requirements for numeracy and English. More appropriate tests are now to be applied with reports sent to the Quality & Standards Committee. The College has adopted new, more appropriate, tests to ensure applicants are suitably qualified to study at each level. The tests submitted show similar tests for English for first year BA, FdA and third year BA applicants, but different tests for numeracy for third year applicants. The source of these tests and details of appropriateness to each level of study have not been provided.

2.14   Applications are considered by the Admissions Committee. The team found that the membership of the Committee varies between documents. No minutes of this Committee were provided to the team.

2.15   There is a process for checking applicants' qualifications to Pearson programmes, including submission of original certificates and use of NARIC. Applicants are generally interviewed to assess their suitability. While student progression and attainment data are discussed at Quality Standards Committee and in annual programme reports, the College does not analyse the progression and achievement of students based on their entry qualifications. Many mature students are accepted without standard academic qualifications and it is not clear how the College ensures that these students are suitable for programmes. Applicants for Buckinghamshire New University awards without appropriate qualifications may be considered as non-standard applicants. Approval of these applicants now rests with the University. The review team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College analyses the academic performance of students based on their entry qualifications to assess the effectiveness of its admissions decisions.

2.16   One of the Concerns recommendations was for the College to provide appropriate information, advice and guidance on preparatory or access study options to any student who cannot demonstrate an equivalence of Level 3 certified learning. In response, the College is preparing to offer Access to HE programmes aimed at applicants who do not meet entry requirements for higher education programmes.

2.17   At the time of the visit, College staff were unclear about the full range of learning difficulties/disabilities and the current legislation that underpins the College responsibilities to applicants.

2.18   Overall, the review team found that it is unclear how the College ensures students are suitable for programmes, finding weaknesses in entry tests, how students without academic qualifications are assessed and a lack of analysis of entry qualifications against subsequent student performance. The team concludes the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate, reflecting weaknesses in admission decisions.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.19   The College recognises the importance of meeting the distinctive approaches to learning and teaching outlined by its awarding partners. Currently, the College has a mixed approach in expressing a teaching and learning strategy with many documents available. Overall, the College strategy reflects its developing market approaches. It is focused on developing autonomous learners, provision of learning opportunities which are personally and professionally relevant and quality assured, and the maintenance of a supportive learning environment.

2.20   The College's approach to assuring the arrangements for students' learning opportunities through peer and management observation in the classroom, development of student independent learning plans, staff recruitment and development processes, would enable the College to meet Expectation B3 in design.

2.21   The review team tested the College's approaches to learning and teaching through examination of the various teaching and learning strategy documents and associated documents supporting staff observation, staff development plans, consideration of staff resourcing made at approval events and staff curricula vitae. The team reviewed the College's virtual learning environment (VLE) facility and met staff and students.

2.22   The Teaching and Learning Strategy is contained in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The team found inconsistent practices regarding this in discussion with staff who suggested that this was not an operational document. It is not clear from the deliberative terms of reference which committee has responsibility for maintaining the document and how progress on meeting the aims and Strategic Plan performance indicators is measured. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation under Expectation B8 regarding the revision of the committee structure to ensure more effective oversight of academic standards and quality.

2.23   The Concerns investigation recommended that the College ensures that its staff recruitment procedures are transparent, equitable, reliable and fair. The need for the development of these was also highlighted by the programme approval processes operated by Buckinghamshire New University. The College has a Staff Recruitment and Development Policy which outlines the recruitment and selection process, and recruits through an educational recruitment agency. There are comprehensive documents provided by a recruitment consultancy covering all aspects of employment administration. These are generic and make no specific reference to the requirements of employment in education.

2.24   The University's validation report also indicated significant staffing issues in terms of staff qualifications and staffing capacity at the College. Strategies to develop activity to meet the issues raised were not clearly in place, but the team was informed of individual staff intent to extend and develop qualifications to ensure that they are in a position to meet University requirements. There is a process for staff development with individual applications considered by the Academic Director. Costs of staff development activity are claimed back by staff from the College.

2.25   The College has established a Staff Appraisal & Development Scheme. The team heard that staff practice reviews, which are intended to take place through lesson observations twice yearly, are incomplete. Guidance documents are provided to support activity, but outcomes from these observations do not presently form part of the annual staff appraisals. Peer observations are intended to identify staff training needs and the Academic Director arranges College support for these. Few examples were available to show how this process is used to contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching. The process is not yet fully embedded and a consultant is engaged at the College to develop staff and appraisal practices. The College is developing its engagement with the Higher Education Academy to expand staff development, with a small group of staff being supported in making portfolio applications.

2.26   In response to the Concerns investigation and recommendation that the College 'develop and implement a clearly articulated strategy for staff development', the College's action plan states that staff training sessions will take place every week. A schedule of these was provided with details of activities or attendees. The Operations Manual for the University indicates that the Partnership Tutor and the Partner Academic Lead at the University will identify general staff development needs and opportunities and ensure that these are calendared, for College and University staff to share.

2.27   While the College has focused on internal staff development through 2015, holding sessions at least monthly to meet development issues, it has not yet evaluated and reported on the impact of these activities against the key performance indicators. The College has decided to reduce the frequency of these meetings by running day-long sessions twice a year.

2.28   VLE facilities are simple and students found them to be effective. The VLE is used to support provision of learning materials to students. The site holds handbooks, module assessment information and unit materials provided by staff.

2.29   A plagiarism-detection system has recently been introduced and is used to process student assessments. The Concerns investigation recommended that the College should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its use of plagiarism-detection software and ensure all teaching staff receive appropriate training. Students stated that they are aware of academic misconduct and submit work to plagiarism-detection software prior to submission. The College does not have a clear policy for advisory practices regarding use of this system and the triggering of action and feedback to students. Investigations by academic staff are not recorded formally and penalties are unclear. The process for avoiding and investigating academic misconduct are included in the Assessment Policy for HND Programmes. This includes guidelines for appeals against decisions and a requirement to report incidences of academic misconduct to awarding bodies, both of which would be difficult in the absence of formal records of investigation and judgement of cases of alleged misconduct. The review team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College implements a clear process for investigation of suspected academic misconduct in line with awarding partner guidelines and ensure that all investigations are formally recorded and reported to awarding partners.

2.30   In total, there are two recommendations related in whole or part to this Expectation. The team concludes that the College has little strategic practice in place to develop responses to the performance indicators set out in its strategic plan for learning and teaching and staff development. Furthermore, it is unclear where responsibility for monitoring its Strategic Plan resides within the College's committee structure. While the College has some processes for staff development, there is no overall strategy for ensuring that staffing capacity and qualifications meet the requirements of its programmes. The review team therefore considers that Expectation B3 is met and the risk is moderate as plans for

addressing problems present before the review have not been addressed in full and become embedded.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.31   The College's Mission Statement shows it is committed to creating a learning environment which will support the students' personal development and enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and the appropriate skills, leading to qualifications relevant to their future employment and career development. The College aims to support students to have an exceptional and distinctive experience through delivering teaching excellence and a pastoral support framework.

2.32   The College is developing Access to Higher Education provision to support students from non-traditional backgrounds. Implementation of the employability strategy seeks to develop students' graduate attributes. Arrangements to support students in developing their potential enable the College to meet Expectation B4 in design.

2.33   The review team tested this Expectation by examining documentation, including the Strategic Plan, the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Employability Strategy. The team also met students, academic staff and those providing professional support at the College.

2.34   Students are allocated a personal tutor, who is intended to guide each student's academic plan and educational progress, supporting them to take ownership of their learning and development and to plan for their future career. The approaches are not formally operated to ensure consistent practice across the student body. The review team noted that no specific development opportunities have been provided for the staff to develop support practices, although students have identified an inconsistency in staff approaches and effectiveness. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College ensures that personal tutor systems are further developed and implemented with clear oversight to ensure consistency of support practices.

2.35   The College acknowledged the need to revitalise its professional support, and undertook a major review of the academic support it provides to students on the HND programmes in order to support their progress further. A specific team was resourced to undertake summer school workshops to provide this additional support. Data providing student views of these approaches has been gathered, though full evaluation of this initiative has yet to be reviewed.

2.36   One of the recommendations of the Concerns report was for the College to systematically review attendance by class, cohort and programme; explore the reasons for any correlations between non-attendance and poor academic performance; and put in place appropriate and timely academic support. In response, the College has developed an Attendance Policy which indicates required levels of attendance and states that it is the responsibility of lecturers and administrative staff to monitor attendance. Lecturers are required to keep registers of attendance but no format is provided. Students informed the team that there were inconsistencies in recording attendance between programmes. Electronic registers are to be introduced for all programmes from September 2015. Enrolment and teaching does not begin until 5 October, therefore no evidence of attendance monitoring is available. The Action Plan states that attendance will be monitored by the Quality and Standards Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee. The team concludes that the College had not yet made sufficient progress against this action and

affirms the actions being taken by the College to implement a consistent method of recording student attendance and regular reporting and monitoring by the Quality and Standards Committee.

2.37   The expansion of the College's library resources to ensure its adequacy and currency for the programmes it delivers was a recommendation of the Concerns report. Buckinghamshire New University considered library resources at validation and found them to be adequate for delivery of its awards. Students will have access to resources at the University. A library has been established at the main site with computers and extensive book stocks for Business and Computing programmes. A member of staff with joint responsibilities as Librarian and Welfare Officer is in post and an additional librarian is to be appointed to allow him to concentrate on student welfare responsibilities.

2.38   Students reported that library resources were not consistently provided across the subject areas. Students on the HND Health and Social Care programme expressed dissatisfaction with library resources and were informed on application that they should purchase required books. Lack of sufficient books for this programme is included in the Pearson Academic Management Review 2014-15. Students on other programmes stated that library resources were adequate. The College has recently subscribed to an online journal system. Staff claimed that many indicative books on Pearson units were out of date and they preferred not to use them, but provided handouts of essential information.

2.39   Reviews of resources used for delivery are not included in annual module reviews and annual programme reviews, and decisions are not gathered for these to be considered and reported on; the College does not have a clear process for establishing and considering learning resource needs. The College has not introduced a policy or strategy for the continued promotion and enhancement of learning resources, including library acquisitions, as recommended by the Concerns report. As a consequence, the review team **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College introduces a clear model of learning resource planning and review.

2.40   Specialist support services are not available directly at the College and students are referred to other companies for specialist support. Formal approaches to ensure equity in practices to enable student development and achievement are not clearly evidenced. The College has an Equal Opportunities Policy and an information for students with learning difficulties and disabilities document but no clear procedures for assessing students' learning difficulties. Students facing difficulties identified as specific learning needs or other specific needs, may be identified and actions planned with the students concerned.

2.41   The College is seeking to develop connections with employers, particularly those who can assist the HND Health and Social Care provision in securing placements for the mandatory practice of 200 hours in a work setting. The College wishes to develop this work and the alumni activities, which are sketched as outline activities only. The team was informed that the current Student Welfare Officer will concentrate on this role solely once a new librarian is appointed.

2.42   Overall, the team concludes that many arrangements and resources are not securely in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The personal tutoring system is not operated consistently and there are no clear procedures for assessing learning difficulties. The Concerns report also made two recommendations around resource provision: the adequacy of library resources and the need for a strategic approach to promoting and enhancing learning resources. The team found that the College has made some progress in expanding its library resources; however, this was found to be inconsistent across its provision. There is no indication of a strategy for the continued promotion and enhancement of learning resources, leading the team to

recommend that the College introduces a resources planning and review model. The team concludes that support at the College is not working in full or effectively, and students confirm that there is a lack of consistency in practice. Close attention, monitoring and oversight is not currently paid to aspects of activity that fall within this Expectation. Consequently, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the risk moderate.

Expectation: **Not met**
Level of risk: **Moderate**

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

2.43 Students are considered by the College to be an integral part of the academic community and as such are encouraged to take an active part in all aspects of College life, including membership of Course Review Committees. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook states that all programmes will elect student representatives to serve on these committees. The agreement with Buckinghamshire New University states that the College is responsible for operating a system of student representation as agreed with the University. The College is committed to the principle of encouraging students to discuss quality assurance matters directly with all staff and particularly with their personal tutors.

2.44 Course Review Committees meet at least once in each semester and minutes are presented at the Quality and Standards Committee for action. Training for course representatives is provided.

2.45 The College has taken steps to include student representation on its Quality and Standards Committee and is making provision for student representation on Academic Board. The College states that it is committed to taking the views of students seriously.

2.46 Information-sharing sessions are held with students to inform them of the results of course feedback, external examiner reports and actions taken by the College.

2.47 The College obtains student views via an Evaluation Questionnaire which is distributed in the middle of the term for each programme. These questionnaires are collected and analysed by the Quality Assurance Director to find out areas of good practice or concern. Learner surveys provide opportunities for students to engage with the quality processes.

2.48 The review team concludes that the design of the College's policies and procedures would allow it to meet the Expectation in principle by taking deliberate steps to engage all students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.49 The review team tested the operation of the Expectation by examining minutes and terms of reference of committees, reviewed information for students, the use of student feedback and spoke to staff and students about student engagement in quality assurance.

2.50 Minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee confirmed student membership of the Committee, although attendance was intermittent. Minutes recorded some discussion of feedback from course committees, although this was not as regular as each semester, and feedback on student representative training. It is unclear how the Committee systematically monitors the effectiveness of Course Review Committees. How student engagement is monitored is not detailed in either the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook or in the terms of reference for the Committee.

2.51 The student submission submitted for this review commented that, for some courses, there are limited opportunities to attend formal meetings and suggested monthly or quarterly meetings. While Course Review Committees include student representatives, at the review visit some students stated that they had limited opportunity to take part in these Committees, and that there is an inconsistent approach in relation to their involvement

between different programmes. The students were positive, however, about the accessibility of College managers and their ability to raise matters with them. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College ensures effective representation and regular monitoring of the collective student voice at all levels of the organisational structure.

2.52   Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, reflecting minor weaknesses and inconsistencies in the implementation and operation of the College's procedures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.53   Assessment, including internal moderation, operates according to awarding partner processes, and external examiner reports confirm that academic standards are maintained to national and awarding partner standards.

2.54   The College Assessment Policy is limited to Pearson awards, which follows the BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality. Annual assessment plans are produced for Pearson programmes. Assessments for Pearson programmes are internally verified before being issued to students. Marking and internal verification is carried out by College staff for all Pearson programmes.

2.55   Assessment criteria are included with each coursework and these are made available on the College VLE.

2.56   External examiner reports for programmes provided by a previous awarding body partner show that commentary on draft assessments and the annual moderators' report confirmed that regulations were followed and there was no risk to standards.

2.57   The new University partner will be responsible for providing all assessment, including assignment briefs, examination papers, marking schemes, and for second marking.

2.58   Procedures in use vary according to the assessment requirements of the awarding partner. The procedures are documented and monitored by awarding partners and would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.59   The review team considered the College's approach to assessment by talking to students, the Director of Quality Assurance and teaching staff. The team also examined a range of documents, including internal examination board minutes, and external examiners' reports.

2.60   For Pearson programmes, first marking is conducted by College tutors, and a sample is internally verified. Internal examination boards are held to consider the results of assessments. External verification is carried out by a Pearson-appointed external examiner during their visits.

2.61   A Pearson management review in April 2015 raised no major issues. The University of Wales external examiner reports, an annual review and their moderator's report of January 2015 did not raise issues of concern.

2.62   For Pearson programmes, serious issues have been raised by standards verifiers/external examiners in their reports, leading to essential actions of assessment design, marking and assessing students. While the Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out the processes and procedures for the development of assignments, links to review, development and consistency of practice are not clearly overseen at the College. Staff practices have continued to be raised by external examiners over recent months (May 2015) showing that urgent activity taken by the College to redress issues regarding assessment

setting and internal verification practices has not yet been effective. Consequently, the lack of implementation of the College's procedures leads the team to **recommend** that, by June 2016, the College should ensure that assessment design meets the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy.

2.63   Assessment boards for University awards are held at the University to its regulations. Assessment boards are held for Pearson programmes and responsibility for the management of internal exam boards lies with the Academic Board, although no reference to inclusion of the business of exam boards is recorded in the minutes of Academic Board. The team did not find evidence that the College has made progress against the Concerns recommendation to develop and implement formal progression requirements, and did not find evidence that this had been incorporated into the terms of reference of the Pearson Assessment Board. The team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College develops and implements formal progression requirements and records details of student performance progression and achievement of awards.

2.64   Following concerns expressed by Pearson external examiners, the College arranged for further training on internal verification to be delivered to staff. Further issues were later identified by a Pearson external examiner and essential actions specified, with which the College complied, following which the results were approved. As a consequence, the team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the processes for internal verification of assessment tasks, and internal verification/moderation of marking, are implemented consistently and effectively, and routinely monitored.

2.65   A previous awarding body required all assessments to be submitted for verification by its staff. An annual review and a moderator's report produced by a previous awarding body partner concluded the process for its programmes was satisfactory.

2.66   Minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee state that internal verification should be 'robust and thorough' but there is no indication of how this should be achieved. Minutes provide evidence that the Director of Quality Assurance reviews external examiner reports and produces action plans. They do refer to external examiners' continuing concerns over consistency of marking of HND programmes. However, it is not clear that committee members have the opportunity to consider the actual reports as only one external examiner report is mentioned in the minutes, for HND Computing, which is positive. Minutes of meetings lack detail to clearly demonstrate the substance of discussion or of that contained in their action plans.

2.67   College procedures require feedback to be provided to students within three weeks; however, students stated that the period between hand-in and receiving feedback varies widely across and within programmes. Course Committee minutes show that students have raised complaints about the timeliness of feedback. The team, therefore, **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College ensures that student assessment feedback is timely.

2.68   Identification of academic misconduct was previously left to individual tutors. However, the College has recently introduced plagiarism-detection software. From April 2015 students are required to submit all written assignments via this software and to provide the similarity report with their submitted work. Instructions on how to use the software are available on the College VLE.

2.69   The team makes a total of four recommendations under this Expectation. Issues raised through the external examiner process on assessment design for Pearson programmes have not been fully addressed and there is a lack of records of oversight of assessment boards for Pearson programmes. One recommendation regards the timeliness of feedback to students, and the lack of a consistent approach to internal verification, which was a matter raised by the Concerns investigation and which has not been addressed by the

College. Consequently, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate to take account of weaknesses in the operation of the College's governance structure and insufficient emphasis given to addressing actions that have been previously identified.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code*, Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.70   The external examiners for the new programmes with Buckinghamshire New University will be appointed by the University to meet University regulations. The College can be responsible for identifying and nominating candidates for the University's consideration. Pearson appoints standards verifiers to undertake this quality assurance role to meet its own regulations.

2.71   Assessment Boards are managed at the University and external examiner reports are provided to the University. Pearson programmes operate by the arranged visits of the standards verifier to the College to meet students and staff, and agree assessment samples. The standards verifiers provide written reports to the College. The College considers Pearson's external examiner reports and takes action on the points raised. These arrangements would enable Expectation B7 to be met in design.

2.72   The review team scrutinised the College's approach to this Expectation by examining documentation including external examiner reports, the College's processes and responses made to these and AMRs, meeting also staff and students.

2.73   Students confirmed that they had some awareness of the external examiner process but none had attended meetings with them. External examiner reports are not published, or made available to students, in a consistent manner. As a consequence, the review team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College ensures that students are fully informed of the external examiner systems and make all external examiner reports available to students in full.

2.74   External evaluation of College programmes is demonstrated through University and Pearson appointment of external examiners. Pearson's reports show that some programmes have experienced blocks on results over the last year. Internal verification and assessment processes have been found not always to be reliable or to national standards. The College's module review template 2013-14 includes a section for reflection on external examiner comments. These are not completed in full. Staff awareness of the broader issues in completing and responding to external examiners' views is not clear.

2.75   Reporting processes are not fully effective. On receipt of examiner reports, course leaders are asked to provide comments and determine actions for the College action plan. Minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee provide evidence that the Director of Quality Assurance reviews external examiner reports and produces action plans. However, it is not clear that committee members have the opportunity to consider the actual reports as only one external examiner report is mentioned in the minutes. Formal reporting processes at the College Quality and Standards Committee omit detailed activity, making overall consideration and actions difficult to track. The College's formal committees and approaches are not being followed. The review team **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College ensures effective processes for the systematic consideration of external examiner reports and action plans.

2.76   Overall responsibility for appointing the external examiners rests with accrediting partners. The findings under this Expectation contribute to two recommendations: the College's arrangements for dealing with external examiner reports are not robust; and students are not fully aware of the external examiner system and the sharing of examiner

reports with them is inconsistent. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is not met and the risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.77   Awarding partners hold ultimate responsibility for the annual and periodic monitoring and review of the programmes delivered at the College.

2.78   The College states that AMRs will be considered in full by the College at its key committees. The College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement procedure and Academic Board terms of reference specify that periodic review and monitoring will take place. The College has introduced annual module reviews which include very brief pass/fail analysis, and student feedback. The Quality and Standards Committee considers academic issues and produces action plans.

2.79   The College holds Course Review Committee meetings for individual courses in the middle of each semester, at which operational issues, raised by staff and students, are considered. This Committee reports to the Quality and Standards Committee, which in turn reports to Academic Board. There is little evidence that programme directors report to formal committees.

2.80   On the basis of the reports provided by awarding partners, the review team confirms that the College complies with its responsibilities to its awarding partners, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.81   The team scrutinised samples of College course monitoring meeting minutes, module review reports and associated action plans, along with the sample provided of the monitoring and review reports of awarding partners. The review team also evaluated the College's approach to programme monitoring and review by talking to students, senior staff and teaching staff.

2.82   For annual review and monitoring, reviews have been routinely undertaken by the College's awarding partners. Staff at the College confirmed that they routinely supply data to awarding partners who then produce their own annual monitoring reviews. The College has also undertaken annual monitoring reviews for its awarding bodies to the format supplied by its partners. Under the new agreement with Buckinghamshire New University, the University is responsible for operating an annual review of the effective delivery of programmes. The College has its own annual monitoring process, which also makes allowance for a full review at least once every five years.

2.83   For Pearson programmes, the College produces annual module reviews. The review team was not provided with evidence of annual course reviews arising from these module reviews. According to the terms of reference for the Quality and Standards Committee, the Committee is to receive an overview of annual monitoring reports and to ensure follow-up of actions taken, however, minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee seen by the team did not document annual course reviews being presented or discussed, or actions tracked.

2.84   Terms of reference for Academic Board require the Board to receive annual summary reports on periodic review and annual monitoring. Minutes of Academic Board provided to the review team do not confirm that such matters are considered, either for

University-validated or Pearson programmes. Annual module reviews contain very general statements about external examiner comments and do not detail any actions or recommendations. It is therefore unclear how external examiner reports are used to feed into any College review. The team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College ensures that internal quality assurance systems enable the Academic Board and senior managers to discharge consistently their responsibilities for academic oversight across all higher education provision.

2.85 The minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee held on 30 July 2014 include consideration of poor performance on HND programmes with an action plan to address these; however, no progress on this plan was provided. This finding contributes to the team's recommendation made under Expectation B6 regarding the monitoring of student performance and progression.

2.86 Student feedback is obtained in the middle of each semester and fed into Course Review Committee meetings at which students are represented.

2.87 Overall, the team found evidence that the College conducts its own processes or the processes of its partner for annual monitoring of its University-validated provision. For Pearson programmes, the team found that there is a process of annual module review but no evidence of programme-level monitoring. The team also found a lack of institutional oversight in the process of monitoring and reviewing programmes. The team makes one recommendation in this area relating to the need for effective oversight of academic standards and quality. The Expectation also contributes to a recommendation made under Expectation B6 with regard to monitoring academic progression. As a consequence, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met and that associated level of risk is moderate, reflecting weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.88   The College has in place a complaints procedure with informal and formal stages and states its commitment that the students will 'receive fair and transparent assessments'. It references the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if the student remains unsatisfied with the outcome. A flowchart of the Student's Complaints Procedure shows one informal stage and a formal stage, and recourse to a second formal stage in the process, although this is not detailed. The Student Complaints Procedure itself details two informal stages and a formal stage, and the possibility of an appeal beyond the formal stage.

2.89   The new agreement with Buckinghamshire New University makes provision for appeals and complaints and their communication and monitoring. Minor issues and informal complains are to be handled by the College while formal complaints and major issues should be communicated to the University. The agreement also requires all appeals to be sent to the University.

2.90   The College Appeals Policy detailed in course handbooks for Higher National qualifications references recourse to Pearson but does not provide information on the process or direct students to where they can access the information. There are details about the complaints and appeals processes on the College website, and details of the appeals procedure are included in the College assessment policy for BTEC programmes.

2.91   The College states that it informs students of both the College's own complaints procedures, and the partner university/Pearson appeals procedures at the beginning of each session. A separate procedure for Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedures exists.

2.92   The College has its own procedures in place and while there are some discrepancies between pieces of information and minor omissions, the processes for handling complaints and appeals would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.93   The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining relevant documents, including College policies, online resources, course handbooks, the Staff Handbook, and committee minutes, and by talking to students and staff about complaints and appeals.

2.94   Students can complete a complaint form to which the College will provide a formal response within five working days. The process does not identify the possibility of using the procedures of awarding partners and unsatisfied students are directed to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Students have commented that many are unaware of the procedures and where they could be accessed. As a consequence, the review team **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College develops and communicates an overarching complaints and appeals process, to be included in the student handbook.

2.95   Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, reflecting the need to amend and update procedures and to improve their accessibility by students.

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

2.96   The College delivers programmes with integrated work-related practitioner elements. It engages with other organisations to secure these elements and has delegated some responsibility for learning opportunities to these bodies. The College communicates with all external bodies via the Director of Academic Affairs. The College has introduced a Workplace Learning Manager and documents to support students on the HND Health and Social Care programme and foundation degree programme.

2.97   The College is intending to partner with an external agency to place students. Arrangements for contractual practice and fulfilment of due diligence in partnership working remain informal with those engaged in these placement settings. Formal written agreements with placement providers are not in place. Students will be provided with a mentor but mentor briefing and packs, tripartite agreements or similar facilities have not been set up. Arrangements to provide effective oversight are not in place. The College is yet to establish the infrastructure to manage the employability developments and in particular provide procedures and processes for formal written agreements with all employers engaged with student placements. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College ensures the infrastructure for the effective oversight of employability and work-based learning activity is in place before programmes commence.

2.98   There is a lack of formal agreements to secure support for work placements. Procedures to develop, approve and manage higher education with others are not well-developed. Some progress has been made following Pearson's blocking of the Health and Social Care programme, which is not yet released. The College's arrangements for the approval and management of the learning opportunities arranged with others do not enable Expectation B10 to be met.

2.99   The review team scrutinised the College's approach to the management of its responsibilities for quality of learning opportunities where other organisations are involved, through a range of documentation. The team considered formal agreements for placement provision, placement support documentation, minutes of meetings, tutor templates and curricula vitae, and met staff from the College, students, academic managers, teaching and professional support staff. The team undertook a telephone conference call with an employer.

2.100   The team found that the College has few arrangements secured and documented to identify and manage learning opportunities for current HND programmes. The College places responsibility on students to find a suitable employer to complete the required working hours for their HND course. Some support is provided through a Placements Manager recently appointed. A Work Practice Assessment Book has been introduced for students to use and pre-work placement training introduced, providing additional set-up activity, performing regulatory (enhanced DBS checks) practices for selected students. These management processes are not yet fully formed, with clear practices to follow in handling the various situations which may emerge whether from a regulatory direction or elsewhere.

2.101   Overall, the College has little in the way of formal arrangements in place to deliver the work-based element of the HND Health and Social Care programme. Arrangements made to date are not complete and would not sustain expansion to meet the greater requirements in managing a foundation degree as is intended. The team makes one recommendation under the Expectation for the College to develop the academic management and infrastructure needed to manage the risks involved. The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is not met and that the risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.102   The College offers no postgraduate research provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.104   Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area, four are met. Two of these four Expectations carry a low risk, while the remaining two Expectations are moderate in risk where there are weaknesses in the operation of procedures and plans for addressing problems that arose before the review have not been addressed in full.

2.105   The remaining six Expectations, B2, B4, B6, B7, B8 and B10 are not met. The review team considers the level of risk associated with all these Expectations to be moderate reflecting weaknesses in the operation of quality assurance processes and procedures; insufficient emphasis given to assuring standards and quality in the College's processes; insufficient emphasis given to addressing actions that have been previously identified; and weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

2.106   The review team has made 16 recommendations for action in whole or in part in this area. They relate to gaps in quality assurance policies, strategies, structures and procedures; ineffective oversight by the College's deliberative committees in monitoring strategy, procedures and outcomes; insufficient emphasis and priority given to assuring quality and standards; inconsistent operation of College systems; and failure to take appropriate action in response to external review activities.

2.107   The Concerns report made nine recommendations in this judgement area (Expectations B2, B3, B4 and B6). The review team found that, while the College has made some progress against seven of these recommendations, in two cases this progress has not been effective in addressing the recommendations and in a further two cases no progress has been made. A total of three further recommendations and one affirmation are made in this report that relate to recommendations originally made in the Concerns report. These recommendations relate to clearer processes for the recording of academic misconduct; implementation of a consistent method of recording and monitoring student attendance; and putting in place a learning resource planning and review model. Overall, the team concludes that the College has developed some strategic practice in the areas identified as weaknesses in the Concerns process.

2.108   Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement 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.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The College recognises the importance of providing clear and accurate information about the student learning experience. Most of its public information is provided in electronic format, and information is mainly provided to current students by teaching staff through the VLE. The College website is the main point of information for both prospective students and the public. In addition to the website, there is an intranet, which provides some programme and general College information for students. The College Charter and other policy documents provide information on policies, procedures, responsibilities and opportunities. Students also receive course handbooks that are reviewed and updated by the Director of Quality Assurance. The Students' Welfare Advisor provides students with information about courses and the enrolment process. Information is also communicated to students via student representatives during Course Review Committee and Quality and Standards Committee meetings.

3.2   Under the agreement with the University, the College is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and currency of the information provided to students, and all public documentation which refers to the University must be approved by the University in advance of publication. Programme Handbooks for new Buckinghamshire New University programmes are produced by the University, with some information specific to College students. The College has responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and currency of all published information provided to students.

3.3   The overall responsibility for the provision of public information is given to the Quality and Standards Committee, which itself reports to the Academic Board. Staff have responsibility for the accuracy of the information they make public, which is under the editorial control of the Academic Director. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of information, senior management and teaching staff check the information before and after publication, with updates and amendments controlled by the Director of Academic Affairs, and amendments are implemented by the dedicated VLE/Website Manager.

3.4   In summary, the information provided to students and other stakeholders about the College's higher education provision has either been provided directly by the University, or has been developed by the College and approved by the relevant validating partner. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met in terms of the design of the process.

3.5   To determine whether the College produces information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation published in hard copy and in electronic media that are made available to staff, prospective, current and former students, and other stakeholders, and spoke to staff and students in meetings. One of the recommendations of the Concerns report was for the College to revise course handbooks so that they reflect accurately the programme delivery and duration of study. The team learnt that these have not been amended as the College is discontinuing its offer of Pearson programmes from 2015-16.

3.6   Programme handbooks for Buckinghamshire New University programmes contain accurate information on the details of delivery and duration of study, which is in line with validation documents. The University requires the College to produce student handbooks, which it has not yet done. Handbooks provided for Pearson programmes are generic with no programme-specific information such as the course structure, modules to be studied, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Staff and students met by the team stated that specifications were available but no College specifications that included units offered, learning outcomes achieved by assessment, and breakdown of delivery were found in handbooks. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College ensures that handbooks are prepared in a timely manner for all programmes and include essential information for the teaching and learning process.

3.7   The review team found that some information contained on the website is not up to date, such as the images used (presenting the previous, not the current, College building). There is an emphasis on international students, although the College currently is unable to enrol international students as it does not hold a Tier 4 Sponsor licence. Furthermore, the 2015-16 online Prospectus and course list on the course pages of the website includes all BTEC awards which the College is not intending to recruit to. The website offers online application for intake in 2015 as well as intakes for 2016. The College stated that it would encourage any new applicants via this route to consider applying for programmes provided by Buckinghamshire New University.

3.8   In summary, the review team found that the College has not addressed the action in the action plan arising from the Concerns report, resulting in a new recommendation to ensure that handbooks are prepared in a timely manner for all programmes and include essential information. Information for prospective students on the College website and web-based brochure contains details of programmes that the College is no longer recruiting to, which is potentially misleading to students. Overall, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the level of risk moderate because the College has given insufficient emphasis and priority to this area.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.10   Expectation C is not met and the level of risk is moderate. The team found that the College has not acted upon a recommendation made in the Concerns report to revise course handbooks as well as information on the College website and web-based material that may be potentially misleading to applicants. The review team makes one recommendation relating to this Expectation.

3.11   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The College has a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook and is aware of its responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The College stated in its self-evaluation document submitted for this review that 'the College Strategic Plan is tightly linked to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities'. The College Strategic Plan identifies six areas for enhancement and an overarching plan for building on current practice. The six areas are: employability; student-centred approaches; curriculum design and delivery; research-based learning; staff development; and learner feedback and evaluation. The Strategic Plan, however, does not provide details of how these areas will be taken forward, for instance, by providing timescales for action or responsibilities for each area.

4.2   Programme Directors are required to provide an annual report and the College annual course review report requires staff to provide details on issues involving Quality and Enhancement of Student Learning Opportunities. The Quality and Standards Committee then analyses the collated information to identify enhancement priorities. Actions are taken, measured, monitored and evaluated in terms of student satisfaction, students' performance, and improved quality of learning opportunities. Overall responsibility for the enhancement of the quality of students' experiences resides with the Academic Board, to which the Quality and Standards Committee reports.

4.3   The College has implemented a staff development programme and keeps records of attendance.

4.4   The information contained in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook together with terms of reference and committee minutes provide evidence that would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5   The review team tested the College's methodology for improving the quality of students' learning opportunities through a review of the College's minutes of relevant meetings, policy and procedure documentation, the student submission submitted for this review, and meetings with staff and students in order to understand the College's approach to enhancement.

4.6   For the six areas for enhancement identified in the College Strategic Plan there is little documented evidence that these have been addressed and produced significant improvements.

4.7   Staff explained that enhancement has been established through the provision of improved resources and the consideration of including students on the Governing body. Staff identified teaching observation and the introduction of role play and poster design, as part of assessment, as contributions to enhancement.

4.8   While minutes of meetings provide evidence that the Quality and Standards Committee discusses some areas which can lead to enhancing the student experience, the minutes do not indicate that the Committee carries out an analysis or collates information to identify priorities.

4.9   The College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook provides terms of reference of the committees that consider enhancement. The College Strategic Plan identifies areas which will contribute to enhancement without identifying detail or responsibilities.

4.10   There is little evidence of reflection on academic standards and quality to inform the development of the higher education programmes and the development of an enhancement-led culture. There are no formal opportunities for teaching staff to meet in an inter-disciplinary way to share and develop their practices, although the College is planning staff development opportunities. Complimentary student and tutor feedback obtained from an assignment developed and used in one programme is to be rolled out across other programmes.

4.11   At meetings with staff they did not demonstrate a clear understanding of enhancement. The team found little evaluation of aspects such as the student experience, learning and teaching, or of the effectiveness of quality assurance processes including course committees, annual monitoring or student engagement to inform and encourage the enhancement of student learning opportunities. For instance, the Quality and Standards Committee, which reports to Academic Board, is responsible for receiving reports from external examiners and annual monitoring review reports but there is little evidence in the minutes of discussion of plans to enhance learning opportunities across the College's provision. Furthermore, it is unclear whether Committee members have the opportunity to consider actual external examiner reports. This finding contributes to the review team's recommendation in Expectation B8 concerning the Academic Board's oversight of all higher education provision.

4.12   The College has subscribed to the Higher Education Academy although it has yet to identify or use the benefits of membership.

4.13   The review team found no evidence of a deliberate, coordinated and structured approach to enhancement and **recommends** that, by March 2016, the College develops and implements a strategy for the enhancement of student learning opportunities in order to ensure that it is deliberate and systematic; and embeds this strategy at all levels of the College. The team concludes that the Expectation is not met and there is a moderate risk that the College's approach will not lead to deliberate and systematic enhancements to student learning opportunities.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.15   There is one Expectation within this judgement area, which is not met and has a moderate level of risk. There are two recommendation relating to this area: the need to develop and implement a deliberate and systematic approach to enhancement; and a contribution to the Expectation under B8 concerning the need for strategic oversight of all higher education provision by the Academic Board.

4.16   The College does not demonstrate a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities in a systematic and planned manner and has limited understanding of the responsibilities associated with the Expectation. There is no evidence of a consistently shared understanding of enhancement among staff. The review team concludes therefore that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College is at an early stage of developing its employability approaches. This is not presently characterised as strategic. The College anticipates links with the Teaching and Learning Strategy to embed employability into the curriculum, but formal statements and records of activity do not address this.

5.2   Careers services are not fully developed at the College, though developing the personal tutorial facility is expected to expand students' access to advice and guidance on such things as CVs and personal development.

5.3   While the College aims to ensure that employability skills are a feature of all programmes, students confirmed that this was experienced inconsistently across programmes. Events and presentations have been arranged approximately monthly in an internal workshop programme, particularly linked to an employability unit on the Computing programme. These are not a regular feature of other programmes and the workshop plan for 2015-16 is not yet published.

5.4   Some examples were provided where engagement with external employer settings has been incorporated into assessment practices. Though recognised as successful, this engagement has yet to be updated and planned for 2015-16 or expanded formally across programmes to particularly include Level 7 students.

5.5   The College provides support in finding work-based assessment opportunities and students are satisfied with the long-term impact of their studies to their employability. The College has recently established an Employability Office to assist learners in training for job hunting and understanding work practices.

5.6   Placement preparation is underway for students on the Health and Social Care programme. The College has most recently set up a Practice Care Room to train students prior to their seeking placements; it has yet to be evaluated.

5.7   In summary, the College has an emerging approach to the development of employability skills, through work settings, employer involvement in preparing students for placement and provision of a practitioner accreditation for the Health and Social Care students.

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 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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