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

July 2017

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 t/a City of London College. The review took place from 25 to 27 July 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Colin Stanfield
- Dr Nick Dickson
- Ms Leigh Spanner (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not 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 academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA[2] and explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[3] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By January 2018:

- increase the extent to which it uses external and independent expertise at key stages of maintaining academic standards (Expectation A3.4)
- ensure policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students are fully accessible to staff and students (Expectations B2 and C)
- ensure that student representatives are fully supported to undertake their role as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5)
- ensure that all information available to students and staff about the timescales for return of assessed work with feedback is accurate and consistent (Expectation B6)
- further develop formal policies and processes to ensure that the information produced for students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to develop robust structures to underpin the College's quality assurance system (Expectations B1 and B8)
- the steps being taken to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students (Expectation B2).

About the provider

The Centre for Advanced Studies Ltd t/a City of London College (the College) was established in 1979. It is located in the Whitechapel area of London in temporary premises. A new College campus is being constructed in premises previously occupied by the College. These are within five minutes of walking distance of its current location.

The College's stated mission is:

- To facilitate students' access to good-quality yet reasonably priced education;
- 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;
- Through the success of the College's completing students and graduates, to help contribute to the well-being of the enterprises they work for and the economies of their communities.

At the time of the review visit the College had concluded its agreement with Buckinghamshire New University and a 'teach-out' period of students on Pearson programmes had finished by December 2016.

There are no higher education students registered with the College. The most recent higher education student numbers indicated that 488 were enrolled on programmes in 2014-15 and 47 in 2015-16.

The review team met two former higher education students of the College and were also aware that the College had introduced programmes for Access to Higher Education provision that were not within the scope of this review. Thus the review team had to make its judgements with regard to the College's position to comply with the requirements of the method for the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) within this context.

Since the September 2015 QAA HER (AP) Review Report, which was preceded in March of the same year by a Concerns Scheme report, the College has entered a significant and extensive period of transition. In response to these two most recent QAA reports the College conflated the recommendations made in each to inform its 2017 action plan. An associated commentary in the self-evaluation document presented by the College outlined the actions taken.

In addition, as part of its institutional strategic review, the College has:

- appointed a Director of Quality and Standards to its management
- reviewed its structures to assure the quality and maintenance of academic provision
- embarked on new campus developments and IT investment
- undertaken a curriculum review
- progressed the design and implementation of a new five-year Strategic Plan 2017-22, which includes a twelve-point Quality Enhancement Framework aligned with the HER (AP) action plan and Strategic Enhancement Plan.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College offers programmes developed by its awarding organisation, Pearson, and is an approved centre. Additionally, the College was approved to deliver a number of programmes on behalf of its awarding body, Buckinghamshire New University (the University). Consequently in setting academic standards the College relies upon the awarding organisation and body to make reference to relevant frameworks including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.2 The awarding body and organisation retain ultimate responsibility for setting standards, informed by the FHEQ and other reference points for academic standards in Part A of the Quality Code. Threshold academic standards for the awarding body programmes are outlined in the College Assessment Policy.

1.3 The Agreement with the University requires that the College undertakes its responsibilities in accordance with relevant benchmarks, the UK Quality Code for Higher

Education (Quality Code), and takes responsibility for staff development on their understanding of such national frameworks and benchmarks. The College's Strategic Plan expresses a continued commitment to this.

1.4   Higher National provision is approved by the awarding organisation on the basis of the Pearson Licence Agreement. The responsibilities checklist sets out the respective responsibilities of the College and Pearson for these programmes. The awarding organisation has responsibility for programme design, gaining Ofqual recognition and for the approval of centres. The College has the responsibility for the design and delivery of learning and assessment to meet the specified learning outcomes.

1.5   Given the College's reliance on the awarding body and organisation to ensure that the programmes the College is approved to deliver align with relevant frameworks and are based upon appropriate benchmarks, this would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6   The team tested this Expectation in meetings with senior College staff and with academic staff. A representative from the University was also present at the academic staff meeting.

1.7   The team also considered the College SED and its Annex A, the Partnership Agreement with its awarding body the College Strategic Plan and the College Assessment Policy.

1.8   The College has a new and revised academic committee structure with oversight of the maintenance of academic standards. These committees comprise the Academic Board, Quality Enhancement Committee, Programme Management Committee and Staff-Student Liaison Committees and the Curriculum Planning & Development Committee. The Quality Enhancement Committee has overall responsibility for curriculum planning, prior to consideration, development and approval at the Curriculum Planning & Development Committee including internal validation and approval.

1.9   The College's Quality Monitoring Calendar provides an over-arching framework for the management and monitoring of higher education programmes, including programme design and development. Usefully this Calendar is mapped to the Quality Code and aligns with awarding body and organisation requirements. The activities in the Calendar drive the Annual Monitoring and Review process.

1.10   Audits are undertaken (based on the Quality Monitoring Calendar) of policies and procedures to ensure that they align with the FHEQ and Quality Code prior to validations and approval by the Curriculum Planning and Development Committee. The Academic Board receives progress with actions within the Quality Monitoring Calendar in order to ensure effective oversight. The senior management team (SMT) receives monthly reports while Academic Board receives quarterly reports

1.11   The College has introduced a wide-ranging staff development programme covering staff engagement with the FHEQ, the Quality Code and other relevant points of reference.

1.12   The College is reliant on its awarding body and organisation to ensure that the programmes it is approved to deliver align with relevant frameworks and are based upon appropriate benchmarks. However, in addition, it has also taken effective measures to ensure that policies are in place and staff development is undertaken to ensure that the College is able to ensure that this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.13   Ultimate responsibility for academic standards lies with the awarding body and organisation based on the respective agreements with the University and Pearson. However, the College has responsibility for the oversight and maintenance of academic standards with regard to its delivery of the programmes.

1.14   Since the Higher Education Review of 2015 the College has used its Task and Completion Committee, with input from the Quality Clerk at Buckinghamshire New University, to review its academic frameworks to ensure that the College meets its responsibilities for maintaining the academic standards set by its awarding body and organisation. The Effective Governance, Administration and Academic Procedures document and its associated appendices set out this framework in detail.

1.15   A key outcome from the 2015 review has been the appointment of a Director of Quality and Standards and an ongoing review and restructure of staff with responsibility for the maintenance and delivery of academic standards.

1.16   The College aims to maintain academic standards through its newly reviewed and revised committee structures, comprising the Academic Board, Quality Enhancement Committee, Programmes Management Committee, Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Curriculum Planning & Development Committee. The terms of reference, membership and reporting structure for these Committees are detailed in the Governance Policy and Procedures Document and the Quality Handbook. The Academic Board has overall oversight of strategy, quality and standards.

1.17   These new committee and reporting structures and their associated processes would enable the College to meet this Expectation.

1.18   The team tested this Expectation in meetings with senior and academic staff at the College and in a meeting attended by the Link Tutor from the University.

1.19   The team also undertook a detailed review of documentation provided by the College, including the SED, The Effective Governance, Administration and Academic Procedures document, the Minutes of the Task and Completion Committee, the Quality Handbook, the University Partnership Agreement and the College Strategic Plan. The team also considered in detail the University's Programme Committee summary reports.

1.20   Given that the College currently has no higher education students enrolled it is not possible to determine how these processes work in practice. Nonetheless, the College has put in place structures which would be effective in their operation.

1.21   The Academic Board is responsible for development and oversight of the academic strategy of the College, which must be approved by the Board of Governors. It oversees the academic governance, academic standards and quality enhancement, and the student experience and meets at least three times in each academic year. The Academic Board delegates responsibility for programme management and quality assurance to the

Programme Management Committees and the Quality and Enhancement Committee, which are subcommittees of Academic Board.

1.22   Overall responsibility for the management of each academic programme lies with the Programme Director, who reports to the Academic Dean. The Programme Director is supported by cohort tutors for each cohort of the programme and by a programme administrator.

1.23   Module leaders have the responsibility to ensure that each module is delivered at an appropriate level and that the module content aligns with the validated or franchised programme and with student requirements.

1.24   Each Programme has a Programme Management Committee which is responsible for strategic planning and decision making at programme level. The Programme Management Committee meets twice in each semester, typically before the beginning and the end of the semester.

1.25   Additionally, each programme of study has a SSLC, which is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the programme. The SSLCs meet at least once in each semester, normally at least a week before the meeting of the Programme Management Committee.

1.26   The Quality and Enhancement Committee meets at least three times in each year, once in each term. Membership of the Quality and Enhancement Committee consists of the Academic Dean, Director of Quality & Standards & the Director of Operations, the librarian, the ICT manager, the programme director, an academic staff representative and one student representative.

1.27   For each academic programme the College has established an internal Examining Board, membership of which is Chaired by the relevant Academic Dean and attended by the Programme Director and all teaching staff. The internal Examining Boards meet at the end of each semester to consider assessment processes and outcomes and to decide final results with recommendations for appropriate degree classification or other interim exit award.

1.28   The College has put in place structures which allow this Expectation to be met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.29   To ensure the College's provision and quality management processes align with its awarding body and organisation's requirements, the College applies their relevant specifications in the delivery of programmes, the assessment of students, programme monitoring and review and the provision of records of study.

1.30   The awarding partners have responsibility for approving specifications for new programmes and any changes to existing ones. The College maintains a record of new and amended programme specifications as a central reference point for their delivery and management.

1.31   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32   The team reviewed examples of programme specifications, course handbooks and student transcripts. They also considered documents from annual course review, student assessment processes and met senior and academic staff.

1.33   Student handbooks contain detailed information on learning outcomes, assessment and programme structure and align with the relevant programme specification. These are accessible to students on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.34   The College provides students with a transcript of the modules studied and the results obtained on completion of their studies, which align with programme specifications. The College keeps a record of student transcripts.

1.35   The Quality Handbook provides guidance on the content of programme specifications which are a reference point for staff during the course approval process. Learning outcomes in programme specifications are used by tutors for the assessment of students.

1.36   The College applies the programme specifications throughout the quality monitoring cycle. They are referred to during the Annual Monitoring Review process including external examiner's monitoring of programmes.

1.37   The review team concludes that the arrangements the College has in place allow the Expectation to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.38   The College is an Approved Centre and delivers Higher National programmes on the basis of the Pearson Licence Agreement. This Agreement is still active despite there being no current students. For the University's provision, approval to deliver franchised programmes is subject to the validation processes of the awarding body. The University students have now all completed their programmes of study, and the contract has ceased.

1.39   The College's Quality Handbook explicitly requires that all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are designed to meet standards defined by the level descriptors set out in the QCF, FHEQ and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and national guidelines. Parameters are also defined for the College's responsibilities with respect to its validating bodies. The Quality Handbook also defines where alignment with the standards of PSRBs is required to meet professional standards or allow for professional registration, and for the use of different awarding bodies and Pearson. The Academic Board and its subcommittee, the Quality Enhancement Committee act as guardians of academic standards and quality of learning.

1.40   The College intends to regularly test through its annual monitoring process, whether programmes are meeting the defined threshold standards. This is reinforced through its intended periodic programme revalidation processes, underpinned by its new Quality Enhancement Framework. The College's regulations and procedures governing the design and approval of its programmes provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring that its awards meet UK threshold standards.

1.41   This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.42   The review team met students and relevant staff and examined a range of evidence to support the College's approach to meeting the Expectation. This included regulations and guidelines governing approval processes, reports of programme approval panels and subsequent discussions at the Academic Board.

1.43   The College had previously undertaken institutional programme review and events to confirm the appropriateness of and confidence in the academic planning for delivery of new programmes. In so doing the College engaged with independent academic and industry expertise to inform programme design.

1.44   The College's root and branch curriculum review, resulting in its new strategic plan and quality enhancement framework, has put in place robust academic planning processes. These processes enable the College in its planned strategic developments to meet the requirements of the Expectation. Any proposed new programme of study is subject to an internal procedure which precedes the College seeking external approval by the awarding body. Initially proposals must be agreed by the SMT and/or Board of Directors. Subsequently an outline proposal is presented to the Board of Governors for their approval.

1.45   Where the Board of Governors deems that the programme is appropriate a working party is established to develop a draft programme, including where the syllabus is taken from an awarding body. The working party reports back to the Academic Board with detailed proposals. Where the Academic Board gives formal internal approval for the proposal it then goes to the awarding body for external consideration.

1.46   The College has introduced a curriculum resource model which seeks to confirm the physical and human resource requirement for programme development and this is now a mandatory component of the internal validation and approval process, requiring CEO sign off prior to approval.

1.47   A new Curriculum Planning and Development Committee has responsibility for ensuring resources are appropriate for delivery of proposed programmes. This Committee will report to the Quality Enhancement Committee any concerns regarding the quality of learning opportunities for any proposed new programmes. The Quality Enhancement Committee provides for the effective planning, development, internal validation and approval of new provision to ensure that new programmes align fully with College priorities and partnership development.

1.48   The review team concludes that this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.49   The College delivers programmes in accordance with its formal agreements with awarding partners. Assessment is monitored by the awarding partners who appoint external examiners and verifiers to ensure both UK threshold standards and its own academic standards have been satisfied.

1.50   The College approach to assessment and the award of academic credit is set out in its Effective Assessment Policy, which aims to ensure that assessment methodology is valid, reliable and does not disadvantage or advantage any group of learners or individuals; that the assessment procedure is open, fair and free from bias and to national standards and to ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of assessment decisions.

1.51   The external quality assurance procedures in place would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.52   The team tested the effectiveness of assessment policies and procedures by examining documentary evidence provided by the College. This included partnership agreements and procedural documents, minutes of standardisation and other meetings, and programme handbooks. The team also had meetings with senior staff teaching staff and students.

1.53   The College previously held an internal examination board, chaired by a senior member of academic staff, to discuss the results, including any inconsistencies, borderline cases and special circumstances, and to make recommendations to the formal examination board of the awarding body.

1.54   The College has delivered a programme of workshops, aligned with the Quality Code, to enhance assessment practice such as quality and timeliness of feedback to students, internal verification and recording and reporting of assessment outcomes for Higher National Provision. In addition, the College now has a policy for managing academic malpractice, which is available to staff and students via its VLE, and is clearly understood. This was produced in response to the previous QAA action plan.

1.55   The College Quality Handbook and Calendar provides an over-arching framework for the oversight of the management and monitoring of higher education provision, including assessment. The development of the new Quality Enhancement Framework incorporating the Strategic Enhancement Plan responds to the previous QAA action plan and sets out the College's intentions in its academic direction going forward.

1.56   Assessment practice is internally evaluated and reviewed to consider an analysis of marking and marking trends and enables comparison within the programme. An annual report and five-yearly review provides an opportunity for the Director of Quality Assurance to

evaluate assessment practice within each programme. The College's assessment regulations are also reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

1.57   The College has in the past effectively managed its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications, and has now in place revised clear policies related to assessment and quality. The achievement of learning outcomes is now robustly linked to assessment and applicable UK threshold standards, and the College's own academic standards have been satisfied. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

1.58   The College Quality Handbook sets out the College's approach to monitoring and review of its programmes and regards the annual monitoring of its programmes as an essential element of its quality assurance procedures, providing an opportunity for reflection on the previous academic year and action planning for the next academic year.

1.59   The annual monitoring process aims to ensure that programmes are meeting their aims and objectives, meeting appropriate national and international standards and are relevant to student and employer expectations. Additionally annual monitoring enables staff to reflect on the previous year, record positive aspects to disseminate good practice and to identify aspects for improvement and establish action plans to enhance the quality of provision.

1.60   This process also requires each module leader to produce a critical module report which identifies aspects of good practice and areas for development. The report considers matters raised by students and actions taken. It also reviews the module assessment strategy, including student outcomes and makes recommendations for any amendments.

1.61   Module reports inform the development, by the Programme Director, of the Programme Monitoring Report which comments on areas of good practice, development, staffing, teaching and learning, assessment, programme management, student outcomes and feedback. External examiner reports inform the Programme Monitoring Report with a summary of issues raised, actions to be taken, and areas of good practice to be disseminated.

1.62   The Annual Monitoring Report is submitted to the SSLC for consideration and comment. The Academic Board receives all Annual Monitoring Reports for consideration and recommendations for any necessary action. A cross-College Annual Self-Assessment Report (ASAR) is then developed, which aims to identify and to address cross-College themes.

1.63   Additionally, the College undertakes periodic programme review on a five-yearly cycle, which seeks to ensure that the programme continues to meet its remit as set out in the original approval. The periodic review is led by senior staff and determines if the programme should be continued, discontinued, or should evolve into a new award. The periodic course review report is ultimately considered and approved by the College Academic Board.

1.64   The College's approach to monitoring and review builds from module to course and to cross College level and reports are considered at appropriate levels in the College structure. As such what is in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.65   The review team tested the effectiveness of the monitoring and review processes by examining documentation supplied by the College, including partnership agreements and procedural documents, annual monitoring reports, minutes of committee meetings, programme specifications, external examiners' reports, programme handbooks and partner

reviews. Meetings were also held with appropriate staff and students.

1.66   The College's Annual Monitoring Review Framework is a reflective, self-critical process, reviewing and evaluating academic performance, drawing on outcomes from Annual Programme Reviews (APRs), leading to an annual self-assessment report (ASAR), on cross-institutional provision. The ASAR is received by the Academic Board which subsequently approves the internal Self-Assessment Quality Improvement action plan.

1.67   College staff have contributed to the development of the new internal Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) as detailed in the Quality Enhancement Framework, the Annual Monitoring Review framework, and captured in the revised Quality Assurance Handbook. Course leaders are expected to reflect and report outcomes to the Programme Management Committee. Course Leaders are then to be required to produce programme-level Annual Monitoring Reports, with consideration and oversight from Module Leader and student feedback.

1.68   Following this, a College-level ASAR will be produced, proposing actions for consideration by the Academic Board. The Board will be expected to approve the internal Self-Assessment Quality Improvement action plan.

1.69   The College uses a Quality Monitoring Calendar for the scheduling of the management and monitoring of higher education provision. The calendar facilitates monthly self-reflection, incrementally contributing to, and driving the Annual Monitoring Review process.

1.70   Student feedback through Module Evaluation Forms and SSLCs, along with external examiner and Standards Verifier reports are used to inform annual monitoring and periodic review.

1.71   There is also evidence that the College conducts regular and effective development events for staff to maintain and enhance the development and monitoring of higher education programmes. These training events are well attended and appreciated by staff. The Quality Handbook provides staff with guidance and a detailed view of the monitoring and quality systems. The College has shown initiative in its development of its new Quality Enhancement Framework, incorporating its Strategic Enhancement Plan, and this provides a clear steer on how the College intends its monitoring and review processes will enable it to further enhance its activities in the future.

1.72   Overall, the evidence shows that the College has effectively and robustly managed its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing its higher education provision with its partners. It was operating in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners to ensure that academic standards were being maintained. Its new Quality Enhancement Framework clearly details how the College intends to meet any future awarding body requirements for monitoring and reviewing its higher education provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.73   All programme design and approvals are subject to the monitoring and approvals process on standards and quality of the awarding partners. As part of these processes the initial stages often require both institutional programme review and events, confirming the appropriateness of, and confidence in, the academic planning and delivery processes and internal monitoring at the College. In addition to the external academic and industry or professional members of validation and approvals panels, the College takes advice from industry representatives in programme design.

1.74   The College Quality Handbook confirms that external expertise is required to be used in the programme design and approval process and for internal assessments. The College Chief Executive commented that the College seeks to employ staff with appropriate sector experience which they can apply to course design, approval, delivery and review.

1.75   The Partnership Agreement with the University confirms that the awarding body has responsibility for appointing external examiners while for Pearson, programme Standards Verifiers are appointed by the awarding organisation who undertake their role through centre monitoring visits and online processes.

1.76   External examiners' reports and reports from centre monitoring visits are received and made available to the staff and students. The Quality Enhancement Committee considers external examiners' reports and provides Academic Board with a summary and action of the external examiners' recommendations. Academic Board has oversight, receiving and reviewing the summary report and action plan from the Quality Enhancement Committee.

1.77   The mechanisms for the use of independent expertise in curriculum design, approval and review present at the College would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.78   The team tested this Expectation in meetings with Senior and Academic Staff and gave detailed consideration to the College SED and to the Quality Handbook and to the Partnership Agreement with the University.

1.79   The review team heard that during approval processes the College seeks and gains external information, advice and guidance on market trends and demands and in some cases from sector experts. The team also heard confirmation of staff sector expertise derived from their work as consultants and in other capacities, with such expertise being used to inform course design, approval, delivery and review.

1.80   To this extent the College does draw on sector expertise but the team considers that currently the extent to which this is independent is limited and therefore **recommends** that by January 2018 the College should increase the extent to which it uses external and

independent expertise at key stages of maintaining academic standards.

1.81   What is currently in place allows this Expectation to be met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.82　　In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in the published handbook.

1.83　　There are seven Expectations in this area and all are met with a low level of risk and there are no affirmations or features of good practice.

1.84　　One recommendation is made by the review team to increase the extent to which it uses external and independent expertise at key stages of maintaining academic standards by January 2018 (Expectation A3.4). The team recognised that the College does draw on sector expertise, but considers that currently the extent to which this is independent is limited.

1.85　　The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College has a number of policies and processes for programme design, development and approval of programmes. These are detailed in the College's Quality Handbook and take account of relevant academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities and resources available to students.

2.2   All programme design and approvals are subject to the monitoring and approvals process of the academic awarding body partners. As part of those processes the initial stages require both institutional programme review and associated events which determine the appropriateness of and confidence in academic planning, delivery and internal monitoring at the College. In addition to external academic and industry or professional members of validation and approvals panels, the College takes advice from industry representatives in programme design. This was evidenced in its work with previous academic partners. However, as reported in Expectation A3.4, the review team considered this needed increasing.

2.3   Initially a proposed new programme must be submitted in the form of an outline proposal agreed by the senior management team and/or Board of Governors. Before any proposed programme is designed, College senior management will determine if it fits with the existing College profile and strategy, and whether the resource base is sufficient to support the programme, both in terms of staff expertise and physical resources. In the future this work will be undertaken under the auspices of the new Curriculum Planning and Development Committee, which reports to the Quality Enhancement Committee. This change, in practice, was brought about by the recent review of the College's quality assurance processes and has resulted in the new Quality Enhancement Framework.

2.4   Given that the College is reliant upon its awarding body and organisation for the final design and approval of programmes what is in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.5   The review team assessed the College's methods of course design, development and approval by scrutinising appropriate documentary evidence supplied by the College, including reports and recommendations of panels that had reviewed programmes on behalf of its Academic Board. The team also met members of academic and administrative staff who had participated in institutional and course approval.

2.6   All programme design and programme approval processes are detailed in the Quality Handbook. These processes are comprehensive and well understood at all levels in the College and provide a robust framework. The root and branch review of the College's quality assurance systems has led to the development of a new Quality Enhancement Framework which clearly identifies where programme design and approval responsibilities lie, and how they meet the requirements of the Expectations. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to develop robust structures to underpin the College's quality assurance system.

2.7   In summary, the College's revised processes for designing, developing and approving programmes are robust, effective and appropriate. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8   The College's Academic Board approved an admissions policy outlining the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions for the 2017 academic year onwards in 2016. These provide clear entry criteria that are agreed with the relevant awarding partner. They are reviewed as part of the Annual Monitoring Review process.

2.9   The College's Admissions Office make decisions based on the agreed criteria and if necessary they refer the application to an Admissions Tutor for the final decision. As part of its strategic commitment to Widening Participation, outlined in the Widening Access and Participation Strategy, the College is committed to a fair and inclusive admissions process. The Admissions Office takes into account work experience, individual merit and non-standard qualifications when considering applications.

2.10   Students are required to undertake language and maths tests where appropriate and all undertake an interview to confirm both academic suitability and motivation to their course.

2.11   The policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students outlined in the College's admissions policy would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.12   The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with senior staff, students and support staff. They reviewed the relevant documentation including the prospectus, website, and admissions.

2.13   The review team found that the College's admissions policy adheres to the principles of fair admission and is underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. The College has a history of working closely with awarding partners to ensure that processes align with their requirements and that admissions decisions are based on agreed entry requirements. Admissions staff are aware of the admissions policies and procedures and confirmed that the College supports them to fulfil their role through internal training, workshops with external experts, access to resources including UCAS webinars and guidance on judging new or non-traditional qualifications.

2.14   The College provides detailed information for prospective students to help them in making decisions about the College's programmes and support staff contact applicants who have incomplete applications and invite them to the College. The written student submission indicated that students felt the information obtained before contacting the College was relevant, accurate and sufficiently detailed. Students can access information about the application process from the Admissions Office, Student Services and the website. However, not all details of the admissions policy are made available to staff and prospective students. The review team **recommends** that by January 2018 the College ensure policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students are fully accessible to staff and students.

2.15   The College is committed to ensuring they select students who are able to complete their programme. If applicants do not meet entry requirements, the College will signpost them to alternative programmes. Although the College has not undertaken cohort analysis in the past, they have developed mechanisms to be able to do this for future cohorts.

2.16   The College has yet to use the current admissions policy for the recruitment of higher education students. However, the review team **affirms** the steps taken to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students.

2.17   Although the College needs to address aspects of transparency, the policies and procedures in place for the recruitment, selection and admission of students are appropriate and adhere to the principles of fair admission. The review team concludes that within the current context of the College they allow the Expectation to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.18   The College's approach to teaching and learning is articulated in detail within the Policy Area: Learning and Teaching, which covers learning and teaching per se, resources for learning, attendance and special consideration and reasonable adjustment. The Learning and Teaching Policy is informed by awarding body and organisation expectations. This Policy is reviewed annually by the Academic Board.

2.19   The Policy is supplemented by a Learning and Teaching Strategy set out in the College Quality Handbook in which the College identifies three main strands of focus; the development of autonomous learners; the provision of learning opportunities, which are personally and professionally relevant and quality assured; the maintenance of a supportive learning environment.

2.20   Teaching is based around, tutorials, seminars, case studies in 'the real world' and the use of the VLE with a focus on developing the employability of students.

2.21   Lead responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching and learning lies with Course Leaders who report to the Programmes Management Committee and the Quality Enhancement Committee. Development of teaching and learning is supported by Peer Review, which was also previously supplemented by Peer Review by colleagues from the awarding body. A Peer Review template is included in the Quality Handbook.

2.22   The College seeks to appoint staff with recent relevant sector experience and enables staff to pursue higher qualifications and is prepared to provide support when staff wish to enrol on programmes or attend conferences. College staff could access the BNU staff development programme covering a range of learning, teaching and assessment issues. As part of the new Strategic Enhancement Framework, the role of the individual in developing as an effective classroom practitioner is encouraged, through engagement with the 'Reflective Practitioner' training programme.

2.23   The College has established a formalised Staff Appraisal and Development Scheme covering all teaching staff, with a subsidiary scheme for administrative support staff. The Scheme operates annually with a formal class observation every two to three years and peer observation in the intervening period. An annual interview by the line manager takes place, informed by a critical self-evaluation by the staff member on a Staff Appraisal and Development Form and a performance evaluation by the manager. This is informed by student evaluation questionnaires, statistical attainment of the modules/programmes that the tutor is responsible for and the external examiner or awarding body reports.

2.24   The College has introduced a Curriculum Resource Planning Model which ensures the physical and human resource arrangements for programme delivery are met before programmes are approved.

2.25   The College places high emphasis on student attendance and attendance monitoring with the measures taken to address poor attendance articulated in the Student Attendance Policy.

2.26   Students are informed about the opportunities available to them and are made aware of their responsibility to engage with theses through the Student Charter and close, regular and accessible communication channels with tutors.

2.27   Students' engagement in teaching and learning is supplemented through induction sessions, course and module/unit handbooks, staff meetings, the VLE, and study skills workshops.

2.28   The team found extensive evidence to conclude that what is in place would allow this Expectation to be met. The evidence provides detail on the College's approach to teaching, learning, student support and the provision of resources to support learning opportunities.

2.29   The team tested this Expectation through meetings with senior, academic and support staff and in a meeting with two former students. In addition, the team undertook an extensive review of documentary evidence including the SED, the Learning and Teaching Policy the College Quality Handbook, the Student Attendance Policy and staff development evidence. The team also viewed a demonstration of the College VLE.

2.30   In their Submission and in the meeting with two former students, the team found that students were positive about the versatility of the programmes and how they open the doors to many opportunities. Students noted that they experienced appropriate academic challenge and were supported effectively by tutors. They also referred to good relationships with all staff who were seen as approachable. In particular they stated that tutors ensure that all students understand the skills required of them and give useful feedback to their questions.

2.31   Students were positive about the facilities and learning resources at the College though they commented that they would prefer a wider variety of class activities and would welcome the opportunity to engage in more social events. Students recognised and valued the sector experience of staff and that staff also used student work place experience to inform learning.

2.32   Staff commented that they enjoy good support from the College to develop both their teaching and subject specific skills and cited a number of examples where this had occurred. For example, external speakers have been engaged by the College to deliver sessions on assessment practice and staff have been supported to undertake higher level professional qualifications. The College is supporting staff in their engagement with the Higher Education Academy. Support and teaching staff also commented on how they had accessed professional development sessions at the University. The team also noted that students have been invited to attend staff development sessions.

2.33   The team found extensive evidence from former students, in documents and in meetings with staff that there are effective processes in place to provide a sound basis for learning and teaching, an appropriate learning environment and to engage student in learning. Consequently this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.34   The College's Mission states that it seeks 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 in their country of origin or globally.

2.35   The College's approach is to create an environment enabling students to develop and achieve, by taking responsibility for their own learning, with an overarching aim to enhance student employability. This approach to supporting development and achievement is outlined in the Learning and Teaching Policy. The College Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines the College's procedures for ensuring progression and retention of students and senior managers recognise the necessity to recruit with integrity to promote positive student outcomes.

2.36   The Student Charter outlines what students can expect with regard to pastoral, academic and personal development support. This includes an emphasis on student engagement with the College through high levels of attendance.

2.37   The College recognises its obligations to support learners with particular needs and has developed its policy for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities to include support for learners with disabilities and those with learning difficulties, including screening for dyslexia and self-declaration. Staff are appointed on the basis that part of their role is to support students in a pastoral capacity.

2.38   The College places emphasis on student attendance and has developed an Attendance Policy which states required levels of attendance and the responsibility of academic and student services staff to monitor attendance. Attendance and progression is monitored by the Programme Management Committee, and following Annual Monitoring, the Academic Board considers success and achievement rates.

2.39   The evidence provided by the College in documentary form and in meetings is extensive and details a comprehensive approach to student development and support - as such the Expectation is met.

2.40   The team tested this Expectation in meetings with senior, academic and support staff and in a meeting with two former students.

2.41   The team also considered in detail the Colleges SED, the Student Submission, the Quality Handbook, which contains the Student Charter and Mission Statement; the Learning and Teaching Policy, which also contains the College Recruitment and Retention Strategy, the Policy Area; Learning and Teaching and the Widening Access and Participation Strategy. The team also reviewed evidence of tutorial meetings with students.

2.42   In meetings with staff and students the team heard that close communication channels with tutors enable students to be fully informed about the opportunities available to them and that they are also made aware of their responsibility to engage with those opportunities. This ensures that they are more likely to make effective use of the services and resources provided by the College.

2.43   Each student is allocated to a member of academic staff who acts as the student's personal tutor. Personal tutors play a key role in the enhancement of student learning identifying in students areas for development and strengths and recommend actions to provide appropriate support, which may be in conjunction with Student Services staff. The team saw evidence of personal tutor meetings with students where simple but not SMART actions were recorded.

2.44   Students were positive about the support, information, advice and guidance that they receive from academic and support staff. Examples of advice included that relating to fees, assessment arrangements, late work and extenuating circumstances procedures, choice of dissertation topics, timetabling as well as where and how to access the support provided by the College.

2.45   The College identifies the particular needs of individual students through the application, enrolment and induction phases and there are further opportunities on programme through personal tutorial and informal contact with both academic and support staff. The College provides classes in learning skills and remedial English language, both at the start of, and during, the programme, for those students with support needs, as well as provision relating to assessments for those with particular learning difficulties or disabilities. Students are supported with DSA applications by the College. Students commented that they would welcome more information advice and guidance on support for students with a disability and for international students. In addition, they stated that more could be done to embed employment and progression guidance and support within their programmes of study.

2.46   The team found evidence and heard from students that the College has processes and resources in place which enable student development and achievement and consequently this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.47   The College has in place a system for student representation whereby at least one student per cohort is selected by their peers to voice suggestions raised by the student body and represent them on various deliberative committees. The College runs SSLCs once per semester where students' representatives and staff discuss student feedback. The College also collects student feedback through module evaluations and questionnaires.

2.48   Through student representatives, SSLCs and feedback questionnaires, the College has taken to deliberate steps to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their academic experience. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.49   The review team was limited to meeting a small number of ex-students to assess how the College's approach to student engagement works in practice. However, they were able to review the student submission, minutes of meetings where students were present or student feedback was discussed, and the College's own records of student feedback. They also met College staff to ascertain the effectiveness of the College's arrangements.

2.50   The College has established an effective partnership with students which informs the quality of their programmes through a range of formal and informal mechanisms. Although the review team had limited contact with students during the review, the student submission and the meeting with students indicated that students understood how they could inform the quality enhancement of their programmes. They said they felt able to raise concerns with staff at any time informally or through feedback questionnaires. Students had selected peers to voice their issues and represent them on committees.

2.51   The review team confirmed that student feedback is discussed in Programme Management Committees and this feeds into the Annual Monitoring Review process. Staff gave a number of examples of when students had informed the enhancement of the College. This was supported by students, who said the College had made many improvements as a result of their feedback.

2.52   In response to recommendations made in the 2015 HER report, the College has reviewed the terms of reference for all its committees to include student representation. Minutes from Programme Management Committee evidence that the College monitors and reviews student engagement processes as part of the College's ongoing quality assurance framework.

2.53   The review team could not meet with any student representatives to assess whether the College worked with them effectively. However, they found that the College does not offer any formal support and guidance to student representatives about their role. The review team **recommends** that by January 2018 the College ensure that student representatives are fully supported to undertake their role as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.54   The College has in place formal processes to engage students individually and collectively in shaping their educational experience, which have enabled enhancement of the College's provision. While the College needs to ensure student representatives are supported in carrying out their role, the overall approach is sound. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

2.55   The assessment regulations applied by the College are determined by the respective awarding bodies they have worked with in the immediate past. In addition, the College uses a range of underpinning strategies including an effective assessment policy and Quality Handbook.

2.56   The Governance Policy states that Academic Board delegates responsibility for programme management and quality assurance to subcommittees including Programme and Quality Enhancement Committees. The College Academic Board takes ultimate responsibility for the nature of assessment practice at the College.

2.57   The College's Effective Assessment Policy and Quality Handbook sets out in detail the approach to the assessment of students, including any malpractice. Greater attention has been given to academic malpractice following recommendations in the previous QAA review, and these are being addressed via the Effective Assessment Policy.

2.58   Assessment design for higher education provision is subject to approval by the relevant awarding body or organisation according to their specified regulations. All assignments go through a robust internal moderation process and the College uses second and double marking processes, which are ultimately checked by the relevant external verifier or examiner. All awards are subject to the scrutiny of an Examination Board.

2.59   The College recognises the importance of feedback, both in terms of the quality of programme delivery, and assessment and all members of teaching staff are expected to provide detailed and timely feedback to students following the submission of assignments for assessment.

2.60   The summary reports emanating from external verifier and examiner reports ensure that assessments standards are maintained at the appropriate level equal to those of comparable institutions. These reports are reviewed by the Quality Enhancement Committee with the intention to inform the action planning which is part of the annual monitoring processes.

2.61   The College's procedures for assessment would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.62   The review team examined the effectiveness of the approaches and procedures to student assessment through scrutinising the Assessment Policy, Quality Handbook, minutes of programme, programme specifications, annual monitoring reports and external verifier and examiner reports.

2.63   The assessment process is robustly reviewed through the annual monitoring review process and proposals for enhancement are captured in appropriate action plans. These procedures are effective and well-embedded in practice, and understood by staff. Standards Verifier reports and awarding institution reports have previously confirmed that assessment practices were sound.

2.64   However, the review team found that in practice, assessment feedback timeliness was in some cases variable, and there was confusion among teaching staff as to the acceptable timeliness of feedback. Students reported that there had been some variability in the timescale of return of assessed work. The team **recommends** that by January 2018 the College ensures that all information available to students and staff about the timescales for return of assessed work with feedback is accurate and consistent.

2.65   The policies and processes for the assessment of students are robust and transparent and provide students with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualification. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.66 External standards verification is undertaken by the awarding organisation appointed standards verifiers during centre monitoring visits. External examiners are appointed by the awarding body. Upon appointment, each external examiner receives a letter of invitation from the College providing details of the term of office, annual fees, brief information on the scheme, together with the City of London College regulations. External examiner's reports are addressed to the awarding body and copied to the College. Standards Verifier's reports are received directly by the College electronic means.

2.67 Both standards verifier reports and external examiner reports are initially considered by the relevant Course Management Committee and inform associated action plans. The College Quality Monitoring Calendar identifies timeframes for the receipt of, and response to, external verifier and examiner reports.

2.68 Both external verifier and examiner reports inform Annual Course Monitoring and they are placed on the College VLE for students to access. Additionally they are used to inform staff review and appraisal.

2.69 The College Quality Enhancement Committee considers external verifier and examiners' reports and provides the Academic Board with a summary and action of the external examiners' recommendations. Academic Board has oversight, receiving and reviewing the summary report and action plan from the Quality Enhancement Committee.

2.70 The College's staff development programme included workshops on responding to external verifier and examiner reports with appropriate recording and monitoring through the committee structure.

2.71 The College is dependent on its awarding organisation and body for the appointment of standards verifiers and external examiner's respectively. However, what it has in place to respond to and manage verifier and examiner reports allows this expectation to be met.

2.72 The team tested this Expectation through detailed consideration of the College SED, the Effective Governance, Administration and Academic Procedures documents, the Effective Assessment Policy, standards verifier and external examiner reports, the Quality Calendar and the Quality Handbook. The team also tested this Expectation in meetings with senior, academic and support staff, and in a demonstration of the VLE.

2.73 Standards Verifier and external examiner reports confirm that assessment practices are sound. The team heard in meetings how their reports are received by the College and responded to with appropriate actions, initially in Programme Committees and subsequently in Programme Annual Monitoring Reports. In addition, the team saw evidence of external verifier and examiner reports available to students on the VLE.

2.74 The College Quality Calendar acts as a useful framework to ensure that timescales for receipt and response to external verifier and examiner reports are met and to ensure compliance in terms of the development and implementation of appropriate actions.

2.75 The team found that the College has in place appropriate processes for the oversight of external verifier and examiner reports whereby the College Quality

Enhancement Committee considers these reports and provides the Academic Board with a summary and action of their recommendations. Academic Board has final oversight in that it receives and reviews the summary report and action plan from the Quality Enhancement Committee.

2.76   The College has also implemented a staff development programme to improve how staff make use of external verifier and examiner reports to enhance teaching, learning and academic standards.

2.77   The team found that the College has a history of appropriate responses to external verifier and examiner reports. External reports confirm that the College has operated sound assessment practices. Consequently the team concludes that this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.78   The College has a range of procedures and processes for the monitoring and review of its programmes principally those for module evaluation and reports on programme monitoring. These are informed by previous awarding partner regulations.

2.79   There is regular in-module monitoring through informal feedback from students at the end of teaching activities which is augmented through one-to-one and group discussions with staff. Formal module evaluation is undertaken through questionnaires which are completed by students at the end of each module. Module leaders are also charged with producing a module monitoring report. Informal and formal student feedback and the module monitoring reports are reviewed by the relevant course leader who is required to draft an action plan in response to student views. The feedback from questionnaires and the action plans are then reviewed by the Quality Enhancement Committee, which has the remit to ensure the systematic review of academic programmes.

2.80   The College has the necessary procedures and structures in place to operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes. These procedures, together with supporting frameworks provided by the awarding partners would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.81   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for programme monitoring and review by examining relevant documentary evidence including partnership agreements and regulations, the Quality Handbook, minutes of programme committees, and Annual Monitoring Reports. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, support staff and senior staff.

2.82   Processes for module and programme monitoring and review are clear and comprehensive. There is a clear authority structure within the College where the annual monitoring process is effectively overseen by the Quality Enhancement Committee reporting to Academic Board and the respective awarding partners.

2.83   Meetings of each programme committee have clear minutes, and these have improved following the implementation of the Effective Governance Procedures under the auspices of the Minutes Task and Completion Committee. The effective annual monitoring reports produced through these committees address relevant issues and good practice. These provide an opportunity for genuine enhancement of the provision within the College. The Quality Enhancement Framework and the Strategic Enhancement Plan also provide a means of ensuring annual monitoring and programme monitoring are rigorously completed. As in Expectation B1, the review team affirms the steps being taken to develop robust structures which underpin the College's quality assurance system.

2.84   There is a systematic and consistent review process in place to maintain standards and quality of learning opportunities. Module and programme monitoring and review processes are designed to provide effective and robust mechanisms to monitor and enhance the provision. The College is appropriately managing its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing the programmes delivered on behalf of its awarding partners. The Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.85   The College has defined an internal complaints and appeals procedures which students must follow in the first instance. Subsequently, the College manages referrals of formal complaints and appeals within the procedures determined by its formal agreements with relevant awarding partner. When it delivered University accredited programmes, the College referred all formal complaints from students enrolled on these programmes to them. Complaints from students on Pearson accredited programmes were managed internally.

2.86   The College keeps a central record of complaints and appeals, with oversight from the Academic Board.

2.87   The procedures outlined in the academic appeals and student complaints procedure are fair, accessible, timely and enable enhancement, allowing the College to meet the Expectation.

2.88   The review team assessed information regarding the College's approach to complaints and appeals in the relevant policy document, in handbooks and on the VLE. They also met senior staff and support staff responsible for overseeing complaints and appeals.

2.89   The complaints and appeals procedures are clear and accessible to students via handbooks and the VLE, and explained during induction. Although the review team had limited contact with students, they indicated that they were aware of how official complaints are made and that they could raise issues informally with staff at any time. Student Services also provide advice and support for any students making a complaints or appeal within the College's processes. The review team found that the policies could be more explicit about where formal complaints and appeals processes differ for students on programmes accredited by different awarding partners.

2.90   The College has worked closely with awarding partners and senior staff have attended events provided by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to ensure their policies and procedures align with sector guidelines and awarding partner requirements for student complaints. Staff responsible for the complaints and appeals met by the review team demonstrated understanding of the College's policies and procedures.

2.91   Since the current procedures have been applicable there have not been any formal complaints or appeals. Staff stated that students are positive about their experience at the College and it is effective at responding to their concerns.

2.92   The procedures the College has in place allow the Expectation to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*

Findings

2.93   The College Mission states that it seeks to enhance student employability, career potential, and quality of work experience. However, at the time of the review visit the College had no programmes which required students to undertake work based learning or work placements. Students on 'teach out' HND programmes, where work placements may be selected, had not taken this opportunity although the College has sought and gained access to appropriate placements should students wish to avail themselves of these.

2.94   The College draft Strategic Enhancement Plan states that where work-based or placement learning is part of a proposed programme of study, the following information should be provided in the proposal;

(i) details of the procedures in place to assess and monitor the quality and standards of placements (including resources and staffing) and level of support received by students (prior, during and following the placement);

(ii) details of communication processes in place and information regarding the respective responsibilities of Institution, placement provider and student.

2.95   The College has devised a dedicated Work Placement Handbook, which comprehensively outlines the infrastructure for the effective oversight of work-based learning activities.

2.96   While currently the College has no programmes which require students to undertake work-based learning or work placements, the policies and procedures that are in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.97   The team tested this Expectation through a review of the SED, the draft Strategic Enhancement Plan, the Quality Handbook and in meetings with students and Academic Staff. The team also scrutinised the Work-Based Learning Handbook.

2.98   The team also received a short 'context statement' from the College which sets out its current position vis-a-vis work placement on 'teach out' programmes with evidence of employer support for work placements.

2.99   The team concludes that this Expectation was met with a low level of risk based on the policies and procedures that are in place.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

The College does not offer research degrees.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.101   There are eleven Expectations in this area of which ten are applicable to the College. All that are applicable are met with a low level of risk.

2.102   The review team identified no features of good practice but did make three recommendations and two affirmations.

2.103   The recommendations in this area are concerned with Sections B2, B5 and B6.

2.104   The first recommendation, in section B2, relates to the review team finding not all details of the admissions policy are made available to staff and prospective students and the review team recommends that by January 2018 the College ensure policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students are fully accessible to staff and students. This recommendation is also referenced to Section C.

2.105   The review team's second recommendation is in section B5 and is concerned with the review team's finding that the College does not offer any formal support and guidance to student representatives about their role. They, therefore, recommend that by January 2018 the College ensures that student representatives are fully supported to undertake their role as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.106   A final recommendation in this section is made in Section B6. The review team found that the timeliness of assessment feedback was variable, and there was confusion among teaching staff concerning the acceptable timeliness of feedback. They recommend that by January 2018 the College ensure that all information available to students and staff about the timescales for return of assessed work with feedback is accurate and consistent.

2.107   In addition the review team makes two affirmations in this area and these relate to Sections B1, B8 and B2.

2.108   The review team recognised the considerable progress the College had made to strengthen its policies and procedures and affirms in sections B1 and B8 the steps being taken to develop robust structures to underpin the College's quality assurance system.

2.109   In addition, while noting in Section B2 that the College has yet to use the current admissions policy for the recruitment of higher education students, the review team affirms the steps taken to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides information about its programmes and provision to the public and students through the website and prospectuses. Students also have access to the VLE, student handbooks, and induction packs which have information about their programmes, the support available to them, the College's policies and minutes of meetings.

3.2 The College's CEO has overall oversight for the production, monitoring and review of information and is supported by the senior management team. The Web Manager is responsible for information on the website and the Head of Marketing for recruitment materials.

3.3 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team evaluated the information the College makes available to stakeholders in handbooks, induction packs, the website, the VLE and prospectuses. It assessed the draft information policy and met senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students to better understand the College's approach to approving information and whether the information it provides meets the Expectation.

3.5 The College has identified a need to ensure that information provided to students and stakeholders is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. It is developing an information policy to ensure consistent oversight and audit for the management and production of information. The draft information policy outlines a clear formal procedure for producing and reviewing information for the public. The review team confirms that the College has begun to formally approve all public information according to this procedure.

3.6 Prospective students have access to information which is clear, accurate and sufficiently detailed to enable them to make a decision. However, the student submission indicated that students mainly heard about the College through word of mouth. This is supported by the recent matrix review of information, advice and guidance, which stated that more could be done to inform a wider audience of prospective students about the College's offer. Also, as identified under Expectation B2, the College's policies and procedures for application and admission of students could be more accessible to prospective students.

3.7 Staff are trained in the information, advice and guidance needs of students from their first contact with the College. Students receive a thorough induction process to make them aware of the College's policies, expectations and the support available to them. The limited evidence from meeting with ex-students indicated that students were satisfied with the quality of information available to them and found staff helpful and responsive.

3.8 Although staff are aware of the Quality Handbook, they do not refer to it regularly. However, the College ensures they are aware of the College's policies and procedures for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance of academic quality through induction and professional development workshops. The College recently ran a committee effectiveness programme which has significantly improved the quality and content of

committee reporting and minutes.

3.9   The review team found there to be lack of clarity among staff around the procedure for the production, approval and review of information for current students within handbooks and the VLE. The draft information policy does not explicitly outline a formal procedure for the production, approval and review of student-facing information and there are no clear guidelines for the content of handbooks or the VLE. The review team **recommends** that by January 2018 the College further develop formal policies and processes to ensure that the information produced for students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.10   Overall the information the College provides is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. The positive steps taken to address concerns in relation to the management of public information give the team confidence that the College has met the Expectation and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11   In reaching its judgements on the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

3.12   There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this section. However, there is one recommendation.

3.13   The review team found a lack of clarity with the College's staff regarding procedures for the production, approval and review of information for students within handbooks and the VLE. The review team therefore recommends that, by January 2018, the College further develop formal policies and processes to ensure that the information produced for students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.14   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** 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 policies and procedures in place which take a strategic approach to enhancement of student learning. These include the Quality Enhancement Framework, the Strategic Enhancement Plan, Quality Monitoring Calendar and the Quality Handbook.

4.2 In addition it has a newly reviewed and revised academic committee structure, comprising the Academic Board, Quality Enhancement Committee, Programme Management Committee, Curriculum Planning and Development Committee and the SSLC, which aim to provide a coherent and effective mechanism for effective recording and reporting to assure the maintenance of academic standards and quality of higher education provision.

4.3 The Strategic Enhancement Plan is drawn from internal and external review outcomes, programme and student engagement activities, student feedback, and driven by the senior management team. The Enhancement Plan confirms the deliberate steps being taken at a senior strategic level within the College, to ensure continuous enhancement and development of the student learning and environment and experience. Underlying this is the Quality Monitoring Calendar, which details the systematic approach to enhancement using six precepts: academic planning and development; admissions and recruitment; learning, teaching and assessment; student engagement, development and achievement; self-assessment; and collaborative partnerships, marketing and public information. Monitoring of progress in enhancing approaches to these precepts is recorded by committees including Academic Board and the Quality Enhancement Committee.

4.4 Evidence reviewed by the team indicates that the College's approach to enhancing the student learning experience would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to enhancement by examining relevant documentation including strategic plans and policies minutes of programme meetings, and annual monitoring reports. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, support staff and senior staff.

4.6 The approach taken by the College to put in place processes to enhance the quality of student's learning opportunities is strategic, systematic and thorough. It takes a very deliberate approach to the enhancement of quality through various methodologies and, in particular, the Quality Enhancement Framework and Calendar.

4.7 The review team concludes that the College is taking deliberate and strategic steps to enhance learning opportunities for students. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.8   In reaching its judgements on the enhancement of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

4.9   There are no features of good practice, recommendations, or affirmations in this area.

4.10   The review team found the College has a deliberate approach to enhance the quality of student's learning opportunities which is strategic, systematic and thorough.

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

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 21-24 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* (FQHEIS).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.