



Higher Education Review of City College Brighton and Hove

February 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at City College Brighton and Hove. The review took place from 22-25 February 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Fazal Dad
- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
- Mr Harry Williams (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 4. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing City College Brighton and Hove the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)⁴ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Amended judgement - June 2017

Introduction

In February 2016, City College Brighton and Hove underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in the following judgements: the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation meets UK expectations; the quality of student learning opportunities requires improvement to meet UK expectations; the quality of the information about learning opportunities meets UK expectations; and the enhancement of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings.

The College published an action plan in August 2016 describing how it intended to address the recommendations, affirmations and good practice identified in the review, and has been working over the last nine months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included three progress updates and culminated in a desk-based analysis by one of the original reviewers of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence received over the preceding months.

The desk-based analysis confirmed that the recommendations and affirmations relating to the quality of learning opportunities had been successfully addressed and the good practice appropriately disseminated. Actions against recommendations, affirmations and good practice relating to enhancement and the quality of the information about learning opportunities, which received positive judgements, had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against the quality of student learning opportunities.

QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body 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.

Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations, affirmations and good practice as follows.

Recommendation - Expectation B3

Staff development opportunities remain extensive, with a dedicated budget that is identified through programme reviews and individual developmental needs. There is a College-wide teaching observation procedure, with criteria appropriate for evaluating the delivery of higher education. The effectiveness of the higher education staff development strategy is continuously evaluated and the College is therefore making sufficient progress against this recommendation.

Recommendation - Expectation B4

It is clear that the College now has a systematic process for planning, monitoring and evaluating the resources provided to support higher education programmes, including opportunities to extend the facilities through the merger with Northbrook College. Student surveys demonstrate satisfaction with the availability of higher education related texts in the library, both in hard copy and electronically. The College is making sufficient progress against this recommendation.

Recommendation - Expectation B5, Enhancement

Regarding opportunities for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their experience, students now have representation on all the College committees. The student voice is also heard through the evaluation of surveys and membership of regular focus groups. The effectiveness of this approach is shown by the input of student opinion in the development of the Higher Education Admissions Policy, the Student Engagement Policy and the student charter initiative. The College is making good progress against this recommendation.

Affirmation - Expectation B2

In relation to admissions the College now has a revised specific Higher Education Admissions Policy. In order to improve recruitment, the College has developed routes to enable students from level 3 courses to progress to level 4 internally. The College quality process incorporates quarterly performance reviews, in which the Assistant Principal and Heads of Department present results against quality criteria to the Executive Team. Admissions are incorporated within the quarterly performance reviews. The College is making sufficient progress against this affirmation.

Affirmation - Expectation B3

With regard to retention and achievement, the College continues to monitor data, the analysis of which indicates that processes to improve the retention of higher education students are effective. These processes are considered by the Quality Enhancement Facilitation Group and reported to the Higher Education Strategic Group, and ensure that sufficient progress is being made against this affirmation.

Good practice - Expectation B1

The emphasis on employment continues to have a positive impact on students' progression to highly skilled employment or further study. Employability has been further embedded with the development of foundation degrees, and one programme being delivered with a partner employer. All programmes include work-based/related learning opportunities or a period of work-placement to prepare students for employment. The programmes provide the students with an extensive range of opportunities to develop employment-related skills and knowledge. This feature of good practice is being developed effectively.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about City College Brighton and Hove

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at City College Brighton and Hove.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at City College Brighton and Hove.

- The extensive engagement of employers in new programme design ensures that programmes are current and relevant to local employment needs (Expectation B1).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to City College Brighton and Hove.

By June 2016:

- ensure that the outcomes of meetings where enhancement initiatives are discussed are systematically captured, so that their impact on the student experience can be monitored and evaluated (Enhancement).

By July 2016:

- put in place a systematic process for planning, monitoring and evaluating the resources provided to support higher education programmes (Expectation B4)
- formalise the process to ensure the accuracy of information across all media following changes to policies, procedures or programmes (Expectation C).

By September 2016:

- implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the higher education Staff Development Strategy (Expectation B3)
- strengthen and monitor the opportunities for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their experience (Expectations B5, Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The introduction of the revised approach to higher education admissions to ensure that students are appropriately recruited and supported (Expectation B2).
- The initiatives put in place to improve retention and achievement on higher education programmes (Expectation B3).

Theme: Student Employability

The College aims to ensure that all students are highly employable graduates and are equipped to move on to further study or employment. The higher education provision focuses on vocationally relevant courses that meet the needs of students and employers in key areas such as business, and in high employment sectors such as service industries and biomedical science. The College's Higher Education programmes provide students with a range of opportunities to develop employability-related skills and knowledge.

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

About City College Brighton and Hove

City College Brighton and Hove is a medium-sized general further education college. The College's mission is to be 'a leading College of Further and Higher Education, in the heart of Brighton and Hove, committed to excellence in teaching and learning'. The College has more than 7,000 students in total and there are 269 students enrolled on higher education programmes.

The College offers a number of foundation degree programmes and some top-up honours degree programmes, which are validated by the University of Brighton. The College also has one Pearson Education Higher National Diploma (HND) programme, although this programme is currently running out.

Since the Integrated Quality Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in November 2011 there have been a number of changes at the College. The most significant change is in the nature of the partnership with the University of Brighton. At the time of the IQER the student numbers were indirectly funded through the partnership arrangements with the University. The College subsequently secured direct funding and now uses its own student numbers for the programmes. Under the previous arrangements, students had access to all of the University's resources and support services, but the primary responsibility for resources and support now rests with the College.

A further significant change has been the reorganisation of the Higher Education Department as part of a College-wide reorganisation, and the creation of a distinctive Higher Education Department headed by an Assistant Principal for Higher Education and a Head of Higher Education. In 2014 the College also reviewed its committee structure for higher education and instituted the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Working Group and the Higher Education Strategic Group.

One of the key challenges has been recruitment to allocated targets. The College attributes this to a number of factors, including the change in the relationship with the University of Brighton, the nature of the programmes offered at the College, increased tuition fees and demographic change. The College has also identified a need to develop a more responsive curriculum that meets the progression needs of its further education students as well as the local community. A further key challenge has been to improve levels of student satisfaction as indicated through the National Student Survey (NSS) data. NSS outcomes are improving but the College is seeking to achieve an ambitious target of 90 per cent satisfaction overall.

The IQER in 2011 made a number of recommendations. The review team notes that the College has addressed the majority of these recommendations. However, the College's update on the IQER action plan suggests that although actions were taken immediately after the IQER, the action plan has not been revisited and updated regularly, and action to respond to desirable recommendations relating to the Staff Development Strategy and procedures for responding to external examiners remains ongoing.

Explanation of the findings about City College Brighton and Hove

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* 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 University of Brighton validates the College's foundation degree and top-up degree programmes. The College also has a Pearson HND programme, although it is no longer recruiting to the programme and there are only three students currently enrolled on it.

1.2 The College's Higher Education Strategic Group scrutinises new programme developments. The Higher Education Board, which has student representation, considers new programme proposals if the programme is going to be validated by the University. The College is a member of a regional consortium of Colleges that developed the Foundation Degrees in Business and Travel and Tourism Management. The University's Academic Partnership Committee oversees the approval process through the Portfolio Planning Group to the University's validation process. The University's requirements are aligned with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Statement*. There is clear articulation from a number of the foundation degrees at Level 5 to an honours degree programme at Level 6. The Pearson HND programme has no College-devised units and is aligned with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

1.3 The College's procedures and its engagement with the requirements of its awarding partners would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 To test the Expectation the review team evaluated programme specifications, annual monitoring and external examiners' reports, and programme design and development documents. The review team met senior College staff, the manager of the University's partnership office, Curriculum and Course Leaders and students. The team also considered University validation documentation, including regulations and reports of validation events.

1.5 The comprehensive documentation confirms that the College adheres to the University's programme validation procedures, which ensures that programmes meet appropriate academic standards. These procedures ensure that all programme learning outcomes are aligned appropriately to the FHEQ. The records of the University's Validation Committee and the programme specifications make it clear that each module and its associated learning outcomes have been developed and calibrated against the requirements of the FHEQ. The student handbooks and programme specifications demonstrate that the College explicitly maps learning aims and outcomes against assessment tasks. Alignment to the FHEQ, together with Subject Benchmark Statements and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Statement*, are considered at an early stage of programme design at a course development workshop. All foundation degree programmes incorporate the characteristics of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Statement* and have local employer involvement in programme design, delivery and assessment. Employers assured the review team that College graduates have the knowledge, understanding and skills that employers and the labour market need.

1.6 External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that learning outcomes are being met. This, together with the comprehensive documentation, shows that the Expectation is met. Annual Course and Institutional Health checks and the University's Partner College Review provide further assurance of the maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

1.7 For the programmes validated by the University of Brighton the responsibility for academic standards, academic frameworks and regulations lies with the University. The University's regulations govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. Overall strategic responsibility for the higher education provision at the College rests with the Board of Governors. The College's Higher Education Strategic Group, chaired by the Principal, leads on quality and development of higher education in the College. The Board of Governors includes an employer member. The individual course boards report to the Higher Education Board, which is a subcommittee of the University's Academic Standards Committee.

1.8 The University has detailed guidelines for programme development and approval. The College also has its own higher education programme approval and development procedure. This includes consideration of the demand for the provision, and that assessment, teaching and learning are in line with the Quality Code.

1.9 The University has comprehensive and transparent assessment regulations. The Pearson HND programme is subject to External Verifier inspection and internal verification. The College has a detailed Assessment Strategy and the moderation process ensures that all module assessments are second marked. The College formally responds to the external examiners through the Academic Health Report.

1.10 The academic frameworks, regulations and processes in place, and alignment with the awarding partners' requirements, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.11 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of University and College documentation and the virtual learning environment (VLE), external examiners' reports and discussions with College staff and students.

1.12 The College has established a coherent academic governance structure for higher education through the development of its own Higher Education Strategic Board and the explicit reporting mechanisms to the University through the Higher Education Board. There are now opportunities to include employers' views, which supports academic standards and benefits the student experience.

1.13 The academic frameworks and regulations of the University and College are transparent and widely disseminated. The University's Regulations are accessible to the College through the University's VLE and the teaching staff develop further understanding through specific staff development sessions. The detail in course handbooks, tutorials from the teaching staff and the College's Venture that students are aware of the academic regulations. Module descriptors and assessment briefs clearly articulate the assessment requirements. Students and staff confirmed to the review team that they understand the regulations and know where they can be accessed.

1.14 The review team concludes that the College, through its well-established relationships with awarding partners, operates within transparent and comprehensive

academic frameworks and regulations, which govern how academic credit and qualifications are awarded. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

1.15 The College shares responsibility with awarding partners for the production, development and maintenance of definitive records in the form of programme specifications. These responsibilities are detailed in the formal governance documentation between the College and its awarding partners.

1.16 The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.17 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated programme specifications, module/unit specifications and course handbooks for programmes of study. The review team also met senior staff, programme leaders and teaching staff.

1.18 Programme specifications, produced with guidance from the University of Brighton and Pearson, are used as the reference point for the delivery of programmes. The specifications indicate how overall programme learning outcomes map against assessment methods, provide information relating to programme structure (including award details and classifications) and include strategies for learning and teaching.

1.19 Review mechanisms engage awarding partners. Programme specifications are approved by a validation panel formed of a cross-section of staff, including awarding partner representatives and external subject experts.

1.20 The review team concludes that the programme documentation provided by the College is of sufficient detail to be used as the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the College's higher education offer. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated 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

1.21 The College's awarding partners are responsible for the formal approval of its higher education programmes. The College follows the University of Brighton's formal processes, using the templates provided, and robust processes ensure full and detailed oversight by the College and University. The College supplements the Pearson approval requirements using similar reference points to those employed on University of Brighton programmes.

1.22 Proposals for new higher education provision are derived from the College's Strategic Vision and Higher Education Strategy to offer an increasing range of higher education opportunities in the local area, in order to provide preparations for employment.

1.23 The awarding partners' formal validation processes ensure compliance with Subject Benchmark Statements, professional benchmarks and threshold standards required by the FHEQ. For the University of Brighton programmes the University retains the responsibility for establishing and implementing the processes for the approval of programmes, through its Academic Standards Committee. The University provides the College with a suite of clearly structured documents and standardised templates for the approval of programmes, including programme specification, module specification, validation approval forms and programme modification forms. Similarly, programme approvals and reports are communicated by the University using standardised templates. At each stage of the process due regard is given to the threshold standards for the qualifications as well as the requirements of the academic regulations.

1.24 For Pearson programmes, there is a single-stage internal process which uses aspects of the approval process for the University programmes, providing additional safeguards above the processes required by Pearson.

1.25 The policies and processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising a number of approval templates supplied by the College at programme and module specification levels, along with minutes/reports of the relevant committees/panels. Discussions with the Principal, senior staff and teaching staff also contributed to the assessment of this Expectation.

1.27 In relation to the validation of new programmes, staff of the College have access to the University of Brighton documentation validation pack, which is available on the University's VLE. Higher education business planning processes are overseen by the College's Higher Education Strategic Group. This Group has overall responsibility for quality and development of new programmes to meet local skills needs. The University requires approval panels for new programmes to have an external panel member. The external reviewer's input is seen as a critical component of the validation process.

1.28 All programme specifications are ratified as the definitive programme document by the validation panel and are signed as such by the Chair of the panel. This document is the

definitive record of the programme, and any subsequent changes to programme specifications are considered by the Higher Education Board in the first instance and, following this, by the subcommittee of the University's Academic Standards Committee. If changes are approved, the revised documents become the definitive version of the programme. In most instances changes are made to modules as a result of the module review process, student feedback or suggestions by external examiners. Careful consideration is given to assessment instruments and the impact on the coherence of the programme as a whole, as well as the likely impact on students. In the case of Pearson programmes, the curriculum lead draws up the definitive document and this is the key document that defines the programme offer.

1.29 The review team found extensive evidence of full documentation, including detail at module level that provided reassurance about the ways in which standards are met. Records of discussions at relevant meetings indicated appropriate levels of engagement with proposals and of assessment of the attainment of required standards.

1.30 The review team concludes that the College has a well-defined strategy for the development of higher education programmes, clear programme development policies, which are being followed by staff engaged in programme development, and effective external oversight. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

1.31 The College operates according to its awarding partners' assessment regulations and assessment requirements for each programme, which are set through the programme approval process. Programme learning outcomes identified in programme specifications are mapped against module learning outcomes using a module map and are defined in detail in module definitions. Details of all assessments and marking criteria are provided in module handbooks. The College is responsible for the setting, marking, moderation and feedback of all assessment of undergraduate degrees.

1.32 External examiners attend examination boards and their reports demonstrate that they engage systematically, commenting on module content and assessments sent to them for review, confirming overall academic standards and reviewing student scripts submitted to them.

1.33 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34 To test the Expectation the review team considered a range of evidence, including module and programme handbooks, assessment briefs, external examiners' reports and validation documents, met staff responsible for assessment and oversight, and met students.

1.35 For University of Brighton programmes students are made aware of academic regulations by their lecturers, and through programme handbooks and the VLE. These regulations set out expectations in relation to assessment practice, including evidence required to meet learning outcomes at module and programme levels.

1.36 Exam boards for the programmes validated by the University of Brighton are chaired by a senior member of University staff and are attended by the members of the programme team as well as the external examiner. The Boards are conducted within the requirements of the University's regulations. The external examiner provides a report, on a University template, which includes views on the quality of the students' work and its congruence with the academic standards of the programme, and which refers to the requirements of the Quality Code. The College's Higher Education Academic Officer records student achievement on internal systems and this is used to produce exam board reports. Minuted examination boards are also held for Pearson programmes. Results are considered within the requirements of the awarding partners, credit is awarded, and all results are recorded in the College's systems.

1.37 In its meeting with teaching staff, the review team was able to confirm that staff are aware of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and how these are used in developing programme and module specifications. Staff confirmed that the assessments that they design are reviewed and verified each year before being confirmed. Following student submission, marks awarded are first-marked and moderated and then sent to the external

examiner for further review before being presented to programme exam boards, where standards and marks are awarded. Any significant changes to the approved assessment tasks require approval by the awarding partner. Students are very satisfied with all aspects of their assessment and the feedback provided by academic staff.

1.38 The review team concludes that programme assessment is well defined and carefully verified, moderated and monitored. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

1.39 The College's higher education quality structure provides the framework within which monitoring and review of programmes is undertaken, to ensure that appropriate academic standards are achieved. Responsibility for monitoring and review remains with the University of Brighton; under current working practices, the College and its programmes are subject to formal and very thorough periodic review every five years. On its own initiative, the College conducts a comparable process in respect of Pearson provision, to secure parity in its higher education programmes.

1.40 The University of Brighton undertakes a Partner Review and an annual institution-level academic health monitoring review process, which involves relevant College managers and tutors.

1.41 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.42 The review team scrutinised a range of evidence to test the success of the framework and its associated processes. This included documentation evidencing all relevant elements of the annual programme monitoring process across several programmes, including Pearson provision. Discussions with all categories of staff and with employers further contributed evidence that programme monitoring and review processes address the achievement of academic standards.

1.43 The College underwent a Partner Review in June 2015; the outcome of this review was that the continuation of the partnership was confirmed and that the monitoring processes were effective in managing the threshold academic standards of the awards. This periodic review process is augmented by annual College and programme monitoring which reports to the Higher Education Board. For annual review purposes the programme leaders prepare an academic health report (AHR) using the University of Brighton template, and the Head of Higher Education prepares an institutional AHR covering all the programmes validated by the University. This is received by the Higher Education Strategic Group, which monitors the completion of actions.

1.44 In its meeting with the College's senior staff and a representative of the University, the review team confirmed that the College maintains regular, clear and extensive communications with its awarding partners. Academic staff at the College are aware of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and confirmed that all changes to assessment processes have to be agreed with the module moderator and external examiner. These are submitted to the partner for approval by the College's Head of Higher Education.

1.45 The documentary evidence and discussion with College staff led the review team to conclude that the College has in place sound and effective processes of programme monitoring and review that address the achievement of threshold academic standards and those required by the awarding bodies.

1.46 The review team concludes that the awarding partners' monitoring and review processes are scrupulously followed. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.47 The College obtains advice from external and independent experts through various methods. The College's Board of Governors includes employers and representatives from higher education. A Governor is a member of the Higher Education Strategic Group, which leads the planning, development and quality of higher education within the College.

1.48 Employers fully participate in the initial design of modules and programmes through programme development workshops. The College's agreement with the local NHS Trust and its Employer Liaison Committee ensures employer participation in the annual review and modifications of the Clinical Life Science programme.

1.49 The University's processes require external input to programme validation. An external adviser attends the panel meeting and provides an independent view of the proposed programme and its comparability with similar programmes nationally.

1.50 The University appoints independent external examiners. The external examiners attend the Examination Boards and report on the assessment processes and the academic standard of a programme. The College Course Boards consider these reports and their responses are included in the annual academic health review.

1.51 The policies and processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.52 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of relevant documentation, including policies and procedures relating to programme development, external examining and employers' contribution. It held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and employers to understand how external advice is used to maintain academic standards.

1.53 The College uses wide-ranging external and independent expertise at key stages in setting and maintaining academic standards. The extensive participation of employers in programme design and development ensures that programmes are current and relevant to local employment needs and that they address the *Foundation Degree Characteristic Statement*. External examiners' reports confirm the maintenance of academic standards and the appropriate assessment of learning outcomes.

1.54 The diligent use of employers and external examiners and the alignment of the College's procedures to those of the awarding partners allow the Expectation to be met. The associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.55 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.56 The College's main responsibilities for maintaining academic standards are for adhering to the policies and processes of its awarding partners, which it generally does effectively. All Expectations in this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases. There are no features of good practice in this area, and no recommendations or affirmations.

1.57 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the College's degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **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 University of Brighton and Pearson retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring that programmes are designed and developed in line with appropriate benchmarks and to the appropriate level of the FHEQ. Oversight of the approval process is maintained by use of standard templates and processes, described under Expectation A3.1.

2.2 The College's activity in designing and developing programmes and seeking the approval of its awarding partners is supported by its Higher Education Department. The College's planning cycle for programme design and approval is overseen by the College's Higher Education Strategic Group.

2.3 Programme learning outcomes and assessment constitute a key element of programme design and development. Scrutiny and discussion of both is central to the approval process. The initiative to develop new programmes is strongly guided by the priorities set out in the College's Strategic Vision and Higher Education Strategy. Opportunity, inclusivity and enterprise are important drivers. Particular attention is paid to the interests of employers, local economic development needs and priorities, and student employability. Consideration of resource requirements forms an integral part of programme approval processes. The College proactively seeks employer support to guide curricular developments. Overall, the frameworks and processes described are conducive to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

2.4 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the framework and processes by scrutinising a number of proposals at programme and module level, and at both stages of the University of Brighton approval process. It also read minutes and reports relating to processes of approval for the programmes of the awarding partners.

2.6 The review team found the programme design and approval processes to be well understood by all involved. The policies and processes set out by the College and its awarding partners are implemented effectively. The evidence of cross-subject involvement in approvals is an aspect of the process that facilitates the exchange of new ideas and new practices. Curriculum leaders provided the review team with current examples of the care taken to align programme proposals with the Quality Code and with Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.7 The College's planning cycle for programme design and approval is overseen by its Higher Education Strategic Group. This Group's key responsibility is to oversee the rationale for the development of new programmes, evidence of sustainable markets, currency in the skills agenda and consideration of existing provision locally. For programmes validated by the University of Brighton the College follows the University's academic approval process and regulations. The University provides the College with a comprehensive set of templates to support the development of new programmes and the validation process. For Pearson's

programmes, curriculum leads complete the necessary approval documents and provide definitive programme documentation.

2.8 In addition, it is a requirement of the University of Brighton to have an external panel member on every validation panel. The role of external panel members includes commenting on the extent to which the proposed programme is likely to meet its intended aims, which is an important aspect of the validation process.

2.9 Very good use is made of external advice and guidance in programme approval processes. Discussions with employers confirmed their close and open contact with the College, and its readiness to take account of their needs in programme design. For example, the development of the Arts Foundation Degree programme in consultation with industry experts provided a particularly effective example of employer engagement in programme design and development.

2.10 The extensive engagement of employers in new programme design ensures that programmes are current and relevant to local employment needs and is **good practice**.

2.11 The review team concludes that the College has well defined programme development policies and procedures. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.12 The College is responsible for managing the recruitment, selection and admission of students to its higher education provision in collaboration with awarding partners. The Higher Education Academic Officer, reporting to the Head of Higher Education and the Assistant Principal, is responsible for managing the UCAS and admissions process. Admissions to the HND programme follow the College's own generic admissions policy. Admissions to programmes validated by the University of Brighton follow the University's admissions policy. Applicants are all invited to an interview to ensure that they can make informed decisions about the suitability of the programme. The College provides a number of informative events for prospective students, including open days (four times a year) and written publicity in the form of online programmes and information leaflets.

2.13 The processes in place at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.14 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated documents that inform the recruitment, selection and admission to the College's higher education provision. The review team also met senior staff, support staff and teaching staff.

2.15 The fact that the College has not developed its own higher education-specific admissions policy may impede the College's ability to recruit higher education students able to complete their programme of choice. However, the College's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Group is in the process of developing a higher education-specific admissions policy for 2016-17 entry. In the past, applicants were only interviewed where there were additional requirements in the admissions process (for example, portfolio or audition), but the College recently made a policy decision to interview all applicants as a means of better establishing the suitability of the programme for the applicant as well as providing an opportunity for early diagnosis of additional support needs. The review team **affirms** the development of the revised approach to higher education admissions.

2.16 The Higher Education Strategic Group reviews admissions to programmes throughout the admissions and enrolment processes. Admissions data is also considered as part of the institutional health reporting mechanisms.

2.17 Following receipt of an application, the College screens the application to ascertain fee status and other candidate details. It is at this stage that additional support or requirements are identified by the College. Applicants are all invited to an interview. Course leaders act as admissions tutors and are responsible for interviewing candidates. Admissions tutors use non-academic criteria to judge candidates during interview following guidance from the Higher Education Academic Officer. Offers are made post-interview against published entry requirements and enrolment takes place following the confirmation of grades. Prior to enrolment, the College offers open events to facilitate the transition into higher education.

2.18 Complaints and appeals relating to admissions decisions follow either the College's own complaints and feedback procedure (for the Pearson provision) or the policy outlined in

the University of Brighton's admissions policy. Applicants may appeal either to the University or, for Pearson programmes, to the College.

2.19 The review team concludes that the College employs recruitment and admission policies that adhere to the principles of fair admission. These procedures are broadly transparent, reliable and inclusive. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.20 The College has developed a Learning and Teaching Strategy to specify students' learning opportunities and to outline the College's pedagogical approach. The draft Strategy was presented to the Student Forum for comments.

2.21 The learning and teaching opportunities are varied and include case studies, live briefs, professional practice, external speakers, visits and student-led events, which enable students to achieve the learning outcomes. The learning resources support these opportunities. The resources available to the students include specific workshops, laboratories, studio spaces, extensive kitchens, music suites and classrooms, together with a dedicated VLE and a specific Higher Education Hub/study and social room.

2.22 Staff support the students academically through the timetabled tutorial system. The College comprehensively supports students in the transition from further to higher education with study skills sessions, bridging programmes, formative assessment and careful explanations at the recruitment and induction stages. The College's Student Support Officer and the Disability Coordinator are responsible for identifying and supporting students with additional needs.

2.23 The 16 teaching staff delivering higher education are well qualified and experienced, with sector-specific experience. At the time of the review the Higher Education Strategic Group had not yet approved the Staff Development Strategy, the production of which was recommended in the 2011 IQER. There is, however, extensive staff development, with a dedicated budget, which is identified through programme reviews and individual developmental needs. There is a College-wide teaching observation procedure with criteria appropriate for evaluating the delivery of higher education.

2.24 The policies and practices of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 The review team tested the Expectation and the effectiveness of teaching and learning by scrutiny of the evidence supplied, including student survey results and external examiners' reports, and by meeting employers, course leaders, teaching staff, students and professional support staff.

2.26 The College monitors and reviews the effectiveness of learning opportunities and teaching practices by teaching observations, student module and annual surveys, participation in the National Student Survey (NSS), feedback from external examiners and employers. The results of these contribute to the annual academic health reviews.

2.27 In surveys and meetings with the team the students were very complimentary about the learning opportunities and the quality of the teaching practices, as were the employers and the external examiners. Students are able to reflect on their academic development through detailed and specific feedback on their assessed work, together with the structured tutorials.

2.28 The College has identified disappointing student retention and achievement as an urgent challenge. The Higher Education Strategic Group (HESG) considers retention and achievement issues and recommends actions. In July 2015 the College appointed a Widening Participation Officer (WPO) to improve retention and progression. The WPO works with course leaders to identify students at risk of low achievement and is able to intervene with extra support. The WPO has developed academic study skills sessions to assist students in the transition to higher education. The College has also improved the pre-enrolment and application processes to ensure that students have an explicit understanding of the commitment of studying a higher education programme. The impact of these interventions will be reviewed at the end of the current academic year and reported to HESG. The retention rate for higher education programmes for the first half of this academic year has improved from 73 per cent to 88 per cent. The team therefore **affirms** the initiatives put in place by the College to improve retention and achievement on its programmes.

2.29 The approach to staff development is currently not strategic but the opportunities are extensive, including generous teaching remission, access to the partner University's programmes and registration for research degrees. The team **recommends** that the College implements, monitors and evaluates the draft higher education Staff Development Strategy. This is to ensure that existing good practice is further enhanced and more securely embedded, and that the impact of the development is systematically reviewed.

2.30 The University approves staff teaching on the programmes that it validates, through scrutiny of staff CVs and sector experience. The College has recently joined the Higher Education Academy with the intention of further enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. The teaching observation process enables staff to reflect on their teaching through the self-filming system. All new staff have a thorough induction to the College and are observed within four weeks of commencing employment to receive developmental feedback.

2.31 There are well defined and reflective methods of teaching observations and scholarly activity together with integrated student support. The review team recognises that the College is acting to improve retention and achievement and affirms these actions. The team concludes that the Expectation is met. The one recommendation relates to the implementation of a policy that is currently in draft form. As the recommendation relates to the completion of work already underway the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.32 The College's strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement is articulated in its Higher Education Strategy and in the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The aim is to provide an outstanding learning experience for all students and to ensure that all programmes are fully resourced, in terms of both equipment and materials as well as academic learning resources.

2.33 There is a clear line of management responsibility. The Assistant Principal, assisted by the Head of Higher Education, is responsible to the Chief Executive and the Principal for the provision. The College's Board of Governors, the Senior Management Team meetings, the Higher Education Strategic Group and Course Boards have oversight of progression and achievement. The impact is evaluated at the annual programme academic health review and through the University's annual academic health report.

2.34 Students are able to develop further their academic, personal and professional potential through placements within employers' organisations. All documentation for these placements is in place and the arrangement with the NHS Trust is covered by a formal memorandum of cooperation.

2.35 The College's Widening Participation Officer and Disability Support Coordinator also contribute to higher education students' development and achievement. The Widening Participation Officer conducts academic study skill sessions for students, including academic writing, meeting assessment deadlines and dissertation support. Students have regular tutorials where their development is discussed.

2.36 The College has appointed a new Chief Operating Officer who will present a resourcing proposal to the Senior Management Team annually. Currently, new programme proposers complete a curriculum development pro form for HESG.

2.37 The College states that physical rooming resources are allocated on an annual basis; higher education students have specific workshops, laboratories, studio spaces, extensive kitchens, music suites and classrooms, together with a specific Hub/study and social room. The library does not have a budget dedicated for higher education provision and relies on its relationship with curriculum staff for subject requests. There are rolling programmes for updating computing resources and software.

2.38 The College was required to develop a resourcing strategy in the University's Partner College Review. A three-year resource plan was considered at the Higher Education Board, and later this year capital investment will be considered as part of a review of higher education. However, the College does not yet have a systematic procedure for allocating and evaluating resources for its higher education provision.

2.39 The lack of a systematic process for allocating and evaluating resources would not allow the Expectation to be met.

2.40 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of relevant documentation, including policies and procedures relating to resource allocation, student achievement and development. It held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, employers and students to

understand how the College monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.41 The College reacts to requests for resources from several separate sources; these are the Higher Education Board, student feedback, programme boards and the module reviewing process. The students, both in their submission for this review and in meetings with the team, said that they appreciate some initiatives but identified specific instances of concern regarding access to resources and issues with staff vacancies. Students highlighted outdated resources, and in a recent survey only 61 per cent said that they were able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when needed. The change in the nature of the relationship with the University has meant that the College is now primarily responsible for providing learning resources, and students now have only limited access to the University's library resources. In the student submission and in meetings with students, some concerns were raised regarding the library provision, including the currency of some of the texts in the College library.

2.42 In respect of placements, students and employers confirmed that the arrangements for the organisation and resourcing of provision to enable student development and learning are formally agreed, and they all understand their respective roles and responsibilities. The College's links with employers contribute to the students' development. The College's employer engagement process provides students with highly valuable live briefs and projects to ensure that students are fully prepared for the world of work.

2.43 The students and the external examiners are complimentary about the teaching staff and the tutorial opportunities; however, students, in their submission for this review and in two meetings with the review team, expressed concerns that their studies had been disrupted by significant staff turnover and absences. Staff explained that there were exceptional circumstances when students had been notified and the schedule had been reorganised. The students met by the review team did not have this understanding and in one case the delivery of the programme, including the arrangements for work placements, had been disrupted because of staffing issues. The absence of a staff contingency plan illustrates the lack of a process for allocating programme resources systematically.

2.44 The review team **recommends** that the College should put in place a systematic process for planning, monitoring and evaluating the resources provided to support higher education programmes, to enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.45 The review team concludes that the College does not have formal arrangements in place to identify, monitor and evaluate resources. The programmes are work-related and so need specialist resources and staff to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.46 The review team concludes that there is a risk of potential impact, on student development and achievement, of staff and current resources not being in place. The Expectation is not met and the associated risk is moderate as there is insufficient priority given to the assurance of quality and standards in the College's planning processes.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.47 The College aims to include the student voice through various feedback mechanisms throughout the academic year, including module reviews, course representation and a student forum. The College also produces its own 'mini NSS'. Students are directly represented at Corporation level and programme level. The College has put in place a student forum, which meets at least twice a year.

2.48 The processes and policies in place at the College allow for students to be involved on a consultative basis; however, the lack of direct student input and engagement at critical stages in the quality assurance process would not allow for this Expectation to be met.

2.49 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated documents related to student engagement at the College. The review team also met senior staff, programme leaders, support staff and students.

2.50 The College does not have a formal strategy for developing student engagement across its higher education provision. However, the College is in the process of developing both a student engagement strategy and a student success strategy. The draft student engagement strategy is concerned with the student voice, representation and student engagement in quality assurance. The College's Widening Participation Officer is largely responsible for managing and driving projects concerning student engagement.

2.51 Student representatives attend course-level meetings. They are provided with an induction to their role and function within the wider context of the College and are given ongoing support and guidance by the University's Students' Union staff and the College's Widening Participation Officer. Student representation is present at course level (course representatives) and Corporation level (student governors). The student forum has the following remit: 'moving the College's engagements with students from a consultative basis to a participation basis'; the College has acknowledged that it has only just started this journey. The student forum meets three times a year and allows students to report any issues that they are having to members of College management.

2.52 The College also has a Higher Education Board, which is a requirement of its partnership with the University of Brighton. This Board reports to the Higher Education Strategic Group. Student representatives, through attendance at Board meetings, are invited to comment on, and get involved with, the management of quality assurance with respect to the University of Brighton provision, including deliberating on proposals for new programmes and modules.

2.53 Meetings with the College highlighted and emphasised the role of the Higher Education Strategic Group (HESG) and Higher Education Quality Improvement Group (HEQIG). HESG and HEQIG, reporting to the Board of Governors, are operationally responsible for managing quality and standards, and for developing institution-wide policy, such as the draft Student Engagement Strategy. However, there is no direct student representation at either HESG or HEQIG and the review team notes that the College has no plans for student membership of these committees. With this in mind, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College should strengthen and monitor the

opportunities for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their experience.

2.54 The College aims to include the student voice through various feedback mechanisms throughout the academic year, including module reviews, course representatives, the student forum and the 'mini NSS'. Student feedback is also included as part of the annual health review for programmes. The College is required to undertake periodic reviews of its University of Brighton provision. Students are not full members of the Academic Standards Committee but meetings with students are included as part of the periodic review of courses and programmes run in collaboration with the University of Brighton. Meetings with students during the periodic review process are recorded and reported by the College. The College does not strategically monitor student engagement other than tracking survey data.

2.55 The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met, with an associated moderate risk, because the College places insufficient emphasis and priority on assuring quality in its deliberative processes through engaging students as partners.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.56 The College follows the academic regulations of its awarding partners and conducts the assessment of its awards through these processes. Prior to validation the University of Brighton appoints an external reviewer for each programme, who reviews and comments on the validity and reliability of the assessment practices. An External Verifier is appointed by Pearson for HND programmes. The assessment requirements are clearly articulated through the programme specifications, which form a definitive record of the programme. These are closely scrutinised during validation. The course handbook and individual module guide, including assessment briefs, amplify and explain the programme assessment requirements clearly and succinctly. The programmes use a broad range of well-considered assessment instruments that reflect the high level skill requirement of their chosen professional sector. The efficacy of the assessment tools is reviewed following each module's completion; where amendments are necessary, these are carried out through the programme modification process.

2.57 The University of Brighton sets out its requirements through its academic regulations, which are communicated through the University's VLE. The regulations for examination boards include membership and terms of reference and conduct. Procedural issues such as conflicts of interest are declared at the outset of the board, and compliance with these is signed by the external examiners as well as the Chair of the Exam Board, who is a senior member of academic staff from the University. All external examiners are required to comment specifically on the extent to which exam boards are conducted, within the requirements of the University's academic regulations.

2.58 Assessment information for each programme is communicated to students in programme specifications and module and programme handbooks, as well as on the VLE. Individual module guides contain clear summaries of assessments, which are typically based predominantly on coursework and involve an initial preparatory formative assignment followed by a substantive summative assessment. The College's assessment policies provide generic descriptions of the amount of assessment required for different module credit sizes, the types of assessment that can be used, generic grade descriptors and level descriptors, and set out the stages for the preparation and delivery of assessment, including internal preparation and verification prior to delivery.

2.59 The College's VLE provides the default mechanism for the submission, marking and feedback of all module assessments to students, except where alternatives are necessary to accommodate non-standard module delivery. The VLE also provides formative opportunities for students to understand issues of plagiarism and collusion, and summative checks on all submitted coursework to detect plagiarism.

2.60 The policies and procedures of the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.61 Discussions with senior staff demonstrated a strong shared understanding of University of Brighton's assessment policies, particularly regarding student feedback, anonymous assessment, employability and work-based learning. They provided assurances

regarding the mechanisms by which comparability of assessment standards are maintained, through internal verification processes and the provision of guidance to staff through professional development sessions. There is clear evidence that staff discuss these issues and the appropriateness of assessment policies and practices across the College's higher education provision. Staff demonstrated a strong awareness of key principles for effective assessment and offered information about the ways in which assessment design takes account of Subject Benchmark Statements and the requirements of the Quality Code, as well as employer requirements. The College's quality department is responsible for logging receipt of reports and responses, identifying any wider issues, monitoring that these have been addressed and, where appropriate, feeding them into the College's quality improvement plan. At a strategic level, reports are made to the Higher Education Strategic Group, which has oversight of all issues that arise from external examiner reports and other aspects of annual monitoring.

2.62 The College conducts all its activities regarding the recognition of prior learning (RPL) within the regulations and requirements of its awarding partners, and these are made available to students through the VLE. The Course Leaders make students aware of the RPL opportunities and any student who considers that they would like to make an application for RPL is supported to do so by the Course Leader.

2.63 All staff recruited to work within higher education fulfil the requirements set out by the University of Brighton, which creates a competence base that enables staff to carry out the requirements of assessment. The requirements of the College's quality framework clearly indicate that staff development must be put in place immediately where assessment is found to be problematic. These measures, together with the University of Brighton's requirements, ensure that staff are adequately equipped to carry out the requirements of assessment in a reliable and valid way.

2.64 Under the requirements of the University of Brighton and the College's Assessment Strategy, all modules are reviewed annually in terms of their assessment practices, including critical reflection on the appropriateness of the assessment instruments as well as suggestions for module changes, which are submitted to the Higher Education Board. There are clear assessment criteria included in each module and assignment brief. This is discussed in some detail during teaching time and this allows both staff and students to develop a shared understanding of assessment and the ways in which academic judgements are made.

2.65 Students whom the review team met were full of praise for all aspects of their assessment, stating that it was thorough, structured and consistent, with detailed feedback. Students also commended the approachability and support provided by all their lecturers, including detailed one-to-one feedback and support on demand.

2.66 The review team concludes that the College has developed and embedded a set of assessment processes, with clear partner oversight. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.67 The University appoints independent external examiners to give impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the assessment processes, the academic standards and the achievement of students in relation to these standards. Pearson appoints External Verifiers for the HND programme. The roles and procedures of external examiners are not included in the College's Assessment Strategy but are fully described in the University's General Examination and Assessment Regulations. External examiners and Verifiers provide annual reports and attend the Course Examination Boards. External examiners' reports are considered at course boards, which have student representation, and in the annual programme academic health reports, which are subsequently included in the University's institutional academic health report. The Higher Education Strategic Group confirms the responses.

2.68 The University provides external examiners with a handbook and training for the role, and provides regular workshops.

2.69 The external examiners and Verifiers appointed by the awarding partners, the College's recognition of their role, and the processes in place to ensure that their comments are considered and responded to, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70 To test the Expectation the review team examined the University's General Examination and Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses 2015-16, programme evaluation documents, external examiners' reports, and College policies and procedures. The team met staff and students to establish the use made of external examiners by the College.

2.71 The College now responds to external examiners' reports through the annual academic health procedure. A University template enables the College to respond to issues raised in the external examiners' reports and to include proposed action, responsibility for the action, and a summary of progress on previous action points. All reports are made available to students via the VLE. Some students said that they had met the external examiners. Student representatives had read the reports, which had been explained by the course leader, in meetings.

2.72 External examiner reports confirm that standards and levels of attainment are comparable with other UK providers and that appropriate standards are being met.

2.73 The review team concludes that the College, through its relationship and well established link with the University, makes good use of the external examiners. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.74 The College follows the University's processes for programme review and evaluation; this includes key roles and responsibilities at the delivering institution together with the ways in which the outcome of such evaluation should be used. For the Pearson programme the annual review is carried out in a similar way and is received by the Assistant Principal for higher education and the Higher Education Strategic Board. The College also follows the University's Periodic Review process schedule, which clearly defines the benefits and purpose of this practice. The annual health reports (AHRs) are completed by the Course Leaders and these are the first steps in evaluating a programme. This document brings together the key components of programme performance indicators: completion rates of programmes, classification of results, student feedback, recruitment rates and external examiner feedback. At programme level, AHRs are discussed with the subject group and matters arising and good practice are shared. From these reports the Head of Higher Education draws together the Institutional AHR and this is considered at the Higher Education Board. The Institutional AHR is also further considered at the University's Academic Standards Committee, where progress against actions is considered.

2.75 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.76 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of the College's monitoring and review processes, and their effectiveness through consideration of the validating University documentation, internal papers and minutes of College committees, as well as through meetings with staff, students and a partner representative.

2.77 The University evaluates its processes and makes amendments to the review processes in line with key external drivers such as the Quality Code and QAA review. The annual theme changes to reflect the University's priorities. In order to carry out reviews effectively, both the University and the College use external reviewers and take feedback from employers where possible, which is particularly well embedded. All programme staff contribute to the AHR through their module reviews and Course Board mechanisms. This creates a formal record of each module's contribution to the programme overall. Student feedback through Course Boards is collated in the annual AHR.

2.78 In its meeting with the College's senior staff and partner representative, the review team confirmed that the College maintains regular, clear and extensive communications with its awarding partners, and distinguishes between day-to-day business, managed through the quality and partnerships manager and academic reviewers, and annual and periodic review, managed through the College and awarding partners' committee reporting structures. As stated in Expectation B5, student engagement is currently based on a consultative process and lacks direct input and engagement from students into the quality assurance process. There is some student involvement in programme monitoring and review; however, the team concludes that there is little evidence of student involvement in programme development.

2.79 The review team concludes that the College maintains a full range of day-to-day, annual and periodic internal review processes for its programmes, which feed into the

University's formal oversight, approval and revalidation procedures. 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

2.80 The College has both a general feedback and complaints policy and an academic appeals policy. Students, regardless of the awarding partner, submit non-academic complaints directly to the College. Academic appeals relating to Pearson programmes of study are managed internally by the College. Academic appeals relating to University of Brighton programmes remain under the remit of the University.

2.81 Course handbooks provide information relating to the complaints, feedback and academic appeals process. Information relating to the complaints, feedback and academic appeals processes is also available online, via the College's VLE. It is the responsibility of the College's quality department to manage the complaints and academic appeals process.

2.82 The processes in place at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated documents that describe the procedure for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities. The review team also met senior staff, programme leaders, support staff and students.

2.84 The College's non-academic feedback and complaints policy defines and explains the difference between informal and formal complaints. The due process to move between levels of complaint is also made clear. Students are encouraged to resolve issues informally through dialogue before instigating a formal complaint. Timescales for the submission and eventual conclusion of the complaints process are provided. The College's quality department has responsibility for ensuring that the complaints and feedback process is completed within the boundaries of the relevant policy. Group complaints and anonymous complaints are not addressed as part of the complaints and feedback policy but are permitted by the College.

2.85 Guidance and support in the submission of academic appeals and complaints can be obtained from the Students' Union at the University. Information relating to both non-academic complaints and academic appeals is available on the VLE. Both processes are communicated during student induction and in student handbooks/course books.

2.86 The review team concludes that the College has procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities that are fair, accessible and timely. The Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.87 The College does not have degree awarding powers but delivers programmes on behalf of, and in collaboration with, the University of Brighton and Pearson Education. In developing programmes designed to reflect local need, the College adopts a strategic approach to delivering learning opportunities with employers of students and of graduates. A strategic aim is that all students undertake high quality work-based learning.

2.88 The College has arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with employers, both at the College and on a work placement. All programmes at the College have well developed work-based, work placement or work-related learning. The Clinical Life Sciences Foundation Degree is a work-based programme provided for NHS employees. The Service Industries and Business programmes include a work placement module of up to 20 weeks. The programmes in the Arts include work-related learning through modules covering professional practice.

2.89 The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.90 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised the programme documentation and work placement handbooks. In addition, the team held a series of meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, employers and students to discuss the organisation and management of work-based learning.

2.91 The College's full placement documentation ensures that there are adequate safeguards for the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Work placement providers complete the health and safety paperwork, which is contained within the relevant module handbook, before students commence work placements. The risks of each placement arrangement are assessed at the outset and the teaching staff visit these students while they are on placement. A Memorandum of Cooperation covers the agreed arrangements for the work-based programme.

2.92 The assessment of work-based learning modules and the maintenance of academic standards are undertaken by the staff who teach on the programme, except for the Clinical Life Science Foundation Degree where NHS staff deliver and assess the work-based modules. The control and oversight of this remains with the College. This is achieved by biannual moderation and review meetings and annual standardisation meetings.

2.93 The course leader conducts comprehensive training sessions, with specifically designated Training Officers. There is a clear handbook that details all core roles and responsibilities. The external examiner has access to all documentation and reports that the assessment process measures students' achievement rigorously and fairly, in line with University of Brighton policies and regulations.

2.94 Students studying towards foundation degrees confirmed that they undertake work placements or work-based activities and that they value their work experience very highly.

2.95 Employers spoke highly of the effective communication and their engagement with activities within the College. They were impressed with the quality of College graduates and placement students. As already noted under Expectation B1 and the identified good practice in that section, employers are particularly well engaged in curriculum design and development.

2.96 The evidence from students and employers confirmed that arrangements for the oversight and management of work-based or work-related learning opportunities and work placement enable the Expectation to be met and the associated risk to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.99 Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this judgement area eight are met, and judged to be of low risk. The other two Expectations are not met and judged to be of moderate risk.

2.100 There is one area of good practice identified in this judgement area, which relates to the involvement of employers in new programme design (Expectation B1).

2.101 There are three recommendations in this area, in Expectations B3, B4 and B5. The recommendation in B3 relates to the need to implement, monitor and evaluate the higher education Staff Development Policy. The recommendation in B4 relates to the process for planning, monitoring and evaluating resource provision for higher education programmes, and the recommendation in B5 relates to the need to strengthen and monitor opportunities for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their experience.

2.102 The recommendations deriving from the areas where the Expectation is not met relate to insufficient priority given to the assurance of quality and standards in the College's processes in these areas. Although the Expectations that are not met do not currently present serious risks, the team considers that the moderate risks that exist could, without action, lead to serious problems over time with the management of these areas.

2.103 The review team concludes that the quality of learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College is responsible for the production and maintenance of information for the public, prospective students, current students and other key stakeholders that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The College has a Higher Education Publishing Policy, which outlines the policy for the production and distribution of information.

3.2 The College provides information relating to its higher education offer through information events, the College prospectus and other marketing materials. The Assistant Principal for Higher Education and the Head of Higher Education have overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of information relating to the higher education offer.

3.3 The processes in place at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated a range of documents. The team also met senior staff, programme leaders, support staff and students.

3.5 College-wide information normally originates from course teams but is ultimately approved by the Assistant Principal and Head of Higher Education, who ensure the appropriateness of the content and quality of information before publication. Programme leaders are responsible for producing and reviewing programme handbooks and programme specifications and for ensuring the validity and reliability of module-related information. Module leaders are responsible for producing and reviewing module specifications and assessment materials and for responding to student evaluation of modules.

3.6 The Higher Education Publishing Policy outlines the procedure for the production and distribution of information relating to the College's higher education offer, covering oral, written and electronic information. It specifically covers marketing material, the higher education prospectus, programme handbooks and specifications, module guides and other College policies. Information dissemination is supported by open days.

3.7 Programme specifications, the definitive record of each programme of study, outline admission criteria; mode of study and programme structure; examination and assessment information; aims and learning outcomes mapped against assessment criteria; and learning and teaching strategies to achieve the assessment criteria. Course handbooks supplement programme specifications and provide information relating to College facilities; pastoral services and support; complaints; student representation; the submission of (late) work; and other such information pertinent to a positive learning environment.

3.8 Programme specifications and course handbooks are important documents that often provide and signpost students to key policies relating to academic conduct and the handling of assessed work.

3.9 The review team found that programme handbooks were signposting students to an out-of-date policy relating to student complaints that omitted the role of the Office of the

Independent Adjudicator Scheme for Higher Education in the student complaints and appeals procedures. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College should formalise the process to ensure the accuracy of information across all media following changes to policies, procedures or programmes.

3.10 Notwithstanding the recommendation within this Expectation, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of risk is low because the recommendation relates to the completion of activity already underway that will allow the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12 The Expectation in Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision is met, and the associated risk level is low. The College has in place mechanisms to ensure that the information that it produces relating to its higher education programmes is fit for purpose and reliable.

3.13 The review team notes an example where policy updates have not been applied to all relevant documents in a timely manner. Although there are procedures for ensuring the accuracy of information across all media, these procedures are currently insufficiently formal. There is therefore one recommendation associated with this judgement area, that the College should formalise the process to ensure the accuracy of information across all media following changes to policies, procedures or programmes. There are no affirmations associated with this judgement areas and no areas of good practice.

3.14 As the Expectation is met and the level of risk considered to be low, the review team finds that the quality of the College's information about learning opportunities **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's strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience is embedded in the culture of continuous improvement within several areas, including governance and committee structures, staff development, and engagement with industry and employers. This is supported by the College's Strategic Vision and Higher Education Strategy, which set out the College's commitment to enhancement at a strategic level.

4.2 Although the College does not have a formal enhancement strategy, the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Group leads on key priorities for its higher education strategies and these are captured in the College's Quality Enhancement Plan. The review team was able to identify the College's enhancement approach through the meetings that it held with staff, students and external stakeholders. These meetings provided the team with information that supported the College policies, committee structures and practices for enhancement, and this is supported by a dedicated quality assurance and enhancement process. This is underpinned by the College's drive to embed a continuous improvement ethos in curriculum delivery and management and the learning environment.

4.3 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 To test the Expectation the review team additionally examined documentary evidence provided in the College's Strategic Plan and Higher Education Strategy, and the Quality Enhancement Group's terms of reference, planning documents and meeting notes. The team also raised questions in meetings, focusing on how enhancement initiatives are managed to form a strategic approach at College level.

4.5 The College states that enhancement initiatives are planned and systematically integrated; staff confirmed in meetings that a number of initiatives are underway, with the aim of enhancing student learning opportunities. Examples of strategy-led enhancements since 2015 include the appointment of a dedicated Higher Education Student Support Officer to assist with the College's ambitions to improve student success; the provision of a higher education student room fitted out with new computers and wireless internet access; a commitment to all higher education staff gaining Higher Education Academy (HEA) membership status; roll-out of tablet computer provision to students and staff; and the development of the Higher Education Hub. However, in evaluating the manner in which approaches to enhancement had been considered at different levels within the College, the team found a lack of a formal process to document outcomes of meetings where enhancement initiatives are discussed (particularly the Quality Enhancement Group), to measure impact on the student experience.

4.6 The review team concludes that the College has processes in place which, if systematically planned and evaluated, would usefully inform the College's overall strategic approach to enhancement. The team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that the outcomes of meetings where enhancement initiatives are discussed are systematically captured, so that their impact on the student experience can be monitored and evaluated.

4.7 The review team formed the view that the College has systems to identify and disseminate good practice and to make use of review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. A range of enhancement initiatives linked to the College's various strategic

intentions is ongoing. The team concludes that the College is progressing effectively to embed its strategy for enhancement fully.

4.8 The review team concludes that the Expectation in respect of enhancement is met and that the level of risk is low, because the recommendation relates to the completion of activity already underway that will allow the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10 There is one Expectation in this judgement area, which is met and which is considered to present low risk. There are no areas of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area and there are no areas of good practice or affirmations associated with other judgement areas that are particularly applicable to this judgement area.

4.11 There is one recommendation in this judgement area, that the College should ensure that the outcomes of meetings where enhancement initiatives are discussed are systematically captured, so that their impact on the student experience can be monitored and evaluated. There is also a related recommendation in Expectation B5 that the College should strengthen and monitor the opportunities for students to engage as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their experience.

4.12 The College has systems to identify and disseminate good practice and to make use of review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. A range of enhancement initiatives is ongoing. The review team concludes that the College is progressing effectively to embed its strategy for enhancement fully.

4.13 The review team concludes that the Expectation in respect of enhancement is met and that the level of risk is low, because the recommendation relates to the completion of activity already underway that will allow the provider to meet the Expectation more fully.

4.14 The review team finds that the College's approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 One aim of the College's Higher Education Strategy is to ensure that all students are highly employable graduates and are equipped to move on to further study or employment. Consequently, the higher education provision focuses on vocationally relevant programmes that meet the needs of students and employers in key areas such as business, and in several high employment sectors such as service industries and biomedical sciences.

5.2 An emphasis on employability has been embedded through the development of the foundation degrees and one programme is delivered with a partner employer. The design and content of all programmes that include work-based/related learning opportunities or a period of work-placement prepare the students well for employment.

5.3 The documentation, students, staff and employers confirm the strength, depth and range of the College's external partnerships. The programmes provide the students with an extensive range of opportunities to develop employability-related skills and knowledge.

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 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See **technology enhanced or enabled learning**.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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