



# Higher Education Review of City College Coventry

October 2014

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at City College Coventry. The review took place from 21 to 23 October 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Emeritus Richard Allen
- Miss Sarah Crook (student reviewer)
- Professor Hastings McKenzie.

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of 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 3. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing City College Coventry 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106).

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

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review).

## Amended judgements April 2016

### Introduction

In October 2014, City College Coventry underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in the judgement that its maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation, and its enhancement of student learning opportunities, meet UK expectations. It also resulted in the judgement that the quality of student learning opportunities and the quality of information about learning opportunities require improvement to meet 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 2015 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 two progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 25 January 2016 with two reviewers. During the visit, the team met senior staff, academic staff, and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations and affirmations relating to quality of and information about learning opportunities had been successfully addressed and the good practice appropriately disseminated. Actions against recommendations and affirmations relating to academic standards and to enhancement, which received positive judgements, had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against the quality and information judgement areas.

### QAA Board decision and amended judgements

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

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

### Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations as follows.

Recommendation - Expectations A2.1, B1 and B6

The revised terms of reference of the Higher Education College Committee have led to more frequent meetings, at which key College staff and student representatives are consistently

present. The meetings take place in accordance with a clearly published schedule and the Committee routinely consider matters of significance to the delivery of higher education and the oversight of quality and standards, in addition to ongoing operational concerns. For example, it formally receives and discusses external examiner reports and a summary of positive comments and critical feedback. The Committee also benefits from the regular attendance of student representatives whose input was beneficial to discussions.

#### Recommendation - Expectation B5

The Head of School for Business and Access has been made responsible for ensuring that the current Higher Education Committee's terms of reference are adhered to. The Committee updated its terms of reference in January 2015, maintaining the requirement for student membership. The College is enabling and encouraging student representation by encouraging students to attend and discussing the representative role with students. Students feel adequately prepared and able to contribute to discussions. Staff confirmed that they understand the importance of student contributions to meetings and that they encourage students to participate. The College has also actively promoted student representative training.

#### Recommendation - Expectation B1 and C

The College has developed a new Higher Education Course Approval Process, overseen by the Head of Teaching and Learning. The Process involves preparation and consultation on proposals within the disciplinary school, followed by a formal request for course approval, the commissioning of external involvement and presentation to a course approval panel. Approved courses are subject to further approval by the awarding partner before final confirmation and preparation of marketing materials. Staff received training on the new process at the Higher Education Conference. Minutes of the Higher Education Committee show that staff understand the new procedure. The staff met by the team were confident in their knowledge of the new procedures and gave examples of how the new procedures had made the systems more robust. Documentation confirms that, even though only one course has been subject to the process, it is operating effectively. Meetings with staff confirmed that the processes are appropriately formalised and documented.

#### Recommendation - Expectation B1

The approval pro forma has been revised such that it includes a section for formal commentary from an independent external adviser before it is presented to an approval panel. Programmes that are approved by the panel are subject to further approval by the Higher Education Committee, which includes an external member. The HND in Art and Design has been subject to the approval process since the original review visit. The team found within the approval documents specific commentary from an external adviser and evidence of subsequent panel deliberations. The revised and more detailed approval process, approved by the College in May 2015, requires clear evidence of external input. The revised process is clear and explicit and course approval panel documentation demonstrates appropriate College oversight of the process and its outcomes.

#### Recommendation - Expectation B9

The College has introduced a new academic appeals policy which is overseen by the Head of Teaching and Learning and reviewed annually. The policy clearly applies to the courses awarded by Pearson and aligns with advice given by the awarding organisation's policy. The Higher Education Conference trained staff in the new policy. Complaints and appeals information is included in all student handbooks. The team found that the students with whom they met were confident that they knew where to find this information and that it was made available to them.

Recommendation - Expectation B6, A2.2, and C

The College reviewed and updated its assessment regulations in July 2015 and made revised regulations available to staff and students on its intranet. It also provided training at the staff Higher Education Conference in summer 2015. College staff whom the team met during the follow-up visit were all aware of the revised assessment regulations and the review team supports the continued training of staff in assessment practices at the annual Higher Education Conference.

Exam boards provide guidance on whether a student may be permitted to resubmit failed work. The boards are now more frequently and formally constituted, although external examiners may not always attend. As the College leaves decisions regarding student resubmission of failed work to individual exam boards, the potential for the inequitable treatment of students remains unless this practice is carefully monitored. The review team concluded that the College is making sufficient progress against this recommendation but some moderate risks remains due to the need for continued close monitoring of assessment referral and resubmission practice.

Recommendation - Expectation B6 and A3.2

The College revised its assessment regulations in July 2015 and disseminated them to staff with training. Evidence of staff training on assessment processes and practices was clear and staff welcomed the new regulations and training. They commented favourably on the revised assessment processes, including the more formal and frequent convening of assessment boards, although it was only since September that the new regulations had been operating to full effect. The review team determined that while staff had received training, its effectiveness was less clear as the timing of the visit was early in the assessment cycle for this academic year.

Recommendation - Expectation B7

The revised the terms of reference of the Higher Education Committee include its role in central oversight of external examiner reports. The Committee now provides a more routine and thorough oversight of external examiner reports and issues. It formally receives external examiner reports and discusses a summary of positive comments and critical feedback. The Committee includes senior members of staff and reports to the College's senior management team, and, in turn, to governors.

Recommendation - Expectation B9 and C

The College now provides information about complaints and appeals in programme handbooks and through other accessible media, such as the intranet. The complaints and appeals policy is described in consistent detail in programme handbooks for students on Higher National programmes. Students on the 2+2 University of Warwick programme receive separate information about the University's complaints process. Information on the complaints process is also available through the College's website, and can be found through the search function. Both students and staff were able to describe where to locate the complaints process.

Recommendation - Expectation C and B3

The College has updated student handbooks and shares policies and procedures with staff through the virtual learning environment (VLE). The College's quality cycle sets out how information about higher education is checked and maintained on an annual basis. Students with whom the team met were largely positive about the information given to them during their time at the College. Students also reported making use of the College's VLE, although

there were variations in course use. The VLE is variably used by programme teams, but the College is taking steps to address this and staff are encouraged and trained to make use of it. This includes tracking use of the VLE, conducting an audit and using a competitive awards system to enhance the use of course VLEs.

Policy documentation is now made available to staff through the VLE. Processes for assuring the reliability and availability of information to all stakeholders are now included in the quality cycle, during which public information is signed off, CVs are updated, and curricula are confirmed.

#### Affirmation - Expectation B5

The College worked with student representatives to identify steps that would support student representatives to fulfil their role. This included providing detailed information to prospective student representatives prior to election, on the role and its responsibilities and the schedule of meetings they would be expected to attend. The College has also delivered student representative training. That training has taken place with a member of senior staff but the small number of students with whom the review team met had not received this, however, some had benefited from a session with a previous student representative and College alumnus, arranged by the College. Training materials are available to students and the College has incorporated student representative training into its quality cycle.

#### Affirmation - Enhancement

The College has provided training in using the VLE and the College's IT services provide ongoing advice and guidance. The College audited progress in populating the VLE against bronze, silver and gold criteria in January 2016. It has made variable progress in developing the provision of online resources; of the 10 sites audited three had met the bronze criteria and seven had not. Staff confirmed during meetings that work to populate the sites was ongoing and that training was readily available. The College worked to establish electronic submission as the default mode of coursework submission for the 2015-16 academic year and this has been well received by staff and students.

#### Good practice - Expectation B4

The College is seeking to expand the 2+2 programme with the University of Warwick and has recruited an additional permanent teacher to the programme. It maintains good connections with the University with the course running effectively, students regularly visiting, and staff attending the Warwick Higher Education teaching day. The Higher Education Committee has discussed making greater use of the staff development opportunities through the University. Documents suggest potential growth in student numbers and staff discussed the success of the course during a meeting. Students confirmed that they feel well prepared for the transition to the University.

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about City College Coventry

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and 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 **requires improvement to meet** 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 Coventry.

- The integration of provision for the 2+2 programmes which enables a smooth transition from the College to the awarding body for the final years (Expectation B4).

### Recommendations

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

By March 2015:

- ensure the Higher Education College Committee fulfils its terms of reference, to provide effective strategic leadership and oversight of higher education (Expectations A2.1, B1, B6)
- encourage and enable effective student representation on committees as set out in the terms of reference (Expectation B5).

By May 2015:

- formalise, document and train staff in course approval processes (Expectations B1 and C)
- use appropriate external expertise in the design and development of programmes (Expectation B1)
- formally agree, and communicate to students, an academic appeals process that aligns with the awarding organisation's appeals policy (Expectation B9).

By September 2015:

- ensure assessment regulations are compliant with awarding organisation guidelines and are accessible to staff and students (Expectations B6, A2.2, C)
- provide staff training on assessment policies and processes (Expectations B6 and A3.2)
- ensure that course external examiner and verifier reports are considered at a senior cross-College level (Expectation B7)

- make information about complaints and academic appeal procedures consistently available to students in handbooks and other accessible media (Expectations B9 and C)
- produce information about learning opportunities that is fit for purpose and accessible (Expectations C and B3).

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

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

- The steps taken to deliver student representative training (Expectation B5).
- The steps taken to extend the use of the virtual learning environment in learning and teaching (Enhancement).

### **Theme: Student Employability**

City College Coventry has a skills-orientated mission statement to help 'the people of Coventry and its region to get the knowledge and skills to succeed'. Strategic priorities include strengthening relations with employers and other partners. The Higher Education Strategy includes objectives to address the local skills gap at levels 4 and 5, and to increase the number of higher education learners entering employment. The supporting action plan includes aspirations for each school to establish links with employers, and for each course and student to benefit from guest speakers and/or work experience opportunities.

Curricula are designed to enhance students' employability skills through the nature of assignment tasks, and opportunities on some courses for work placements. The College has a careers service which provides specific support to higher education students, such as an annual careers fair, and prepares students for employment through support with writing CVs and application forms, and interview techniques.

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



## About City College Coventry

City College Coventry (the College) is a medium-sized general further education college located in central Coventry. The College formed from the merger of Tile Hill College and Coventry Technical College in 2002. It moved to its current, purpose-built and modern premises in 2009 to become a single campus College. The College's mission is to support the knowledge and skills economy of the region and its vision is to achieve excellence.

The College's priorities are set out in its strategic objectives and in its Higher Education Strategy 2014-16, and include aims to:

- improve success rates and the quality of teaching and learning
- build relationships with employers and other partners
- enhance provision in engineering, construction, public and financial services
- develop higher education provision which reflects the priorities of the region
- develop a cohesive and self-critical academic community
- develop progression agreements with local higher education providers
- increase the number of students from widening participation backgrounds.

The College's Governing Body is responsible for the College's mission and activities, the quality strategy and financial resources. It is supported in its role by a series of committees. The College is led by a newly appointed Principal, supported by a senior management team. This team comprises Assistant Principals and a subteam belonging to a Deputy Principal. This subteam includes staff with core quality assurance responsibilities: the assistant principal quality, assistant principal curriculum and an assistant principal for student services. The College has six academic schools with deliberative committees in each school, the Higher Education Course Committees. These report to the cross-College Higher Education College Committee, which is responsible for the compliance of higher education courses with regulatory and quality assurance frameworks, and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The Higher Education Committee in turn reports to the senior management team.

The College has over 5,000 students of which over 100 study higher education programmes. The College has a partnership with Pearson to deliver four Higher National programmes in the subject areas of business, photography, music and performing arts. The College has a partnership with the University of Warwick to deliver three programmes: a Diploma in Education and Training, and two bachelor programmes whereby students complete two years at the College before completing the two final years at the University ('2+2' programmes). The College is currently only delivering one of the 2+2 programmes, a BA in Social Studies - a programme that has been running at the College in partnership with the University for over 24 years.

The College has made significant changes since its previous review by QAA in 2010, mainly in response to an Ofsted inspection in 2013. Changes include a new principal and senior management team, and an organisational restructure. It has designated responsibility for higher education to one of the heads of school. The College appointed a Head of Quality and Performance Standards but this post is currently vacant, as is the post of Assistant Principal Quality. The College has developed a Higher Education Strategy and intends to expand its portfolio of courses.

The College considers changes to higher education funding and the impact these have had on recruitment a key challenge, but recognises that the removal of student number controls represents an opportunity. Other challenges include meeting the demand for higher education from those already in employment, and widening participation.

The College has responded to all the recommendations made in the 2010 QAA review. It has developed a specific higher education calendar for quality assurance processes, which include scheduling student surveys and responses to the results of these. The College has revised the terms of reference of its Higher Education College Committee to include scrutiny of external examiner reports, and the review team comments on this further in paragraph 1.10. The College staff development plan now includes training specific to staff in higher education. It has taken steps to enhance library facilities and train staff on the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE), and has introduced initiatives to enhance use of the VLE. The College has revised its self-evaluation document template to encourage course leaders to reflect on external examiner reports. A Higher Education Strategy has been introduced. Only one recommendation from the 2010 review appears not to have been met, relating to a requirement to ensure the Learning and Teaching Strategy and its observation of teaching make more reference to higher education. The College's current Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14 makes no specific reference to higher education, but is due for revision.

## Explanation of the findings about City College Coventry

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.1 The College works in partnership with one awarding body: the University of Warwick (the University), and one awarding organisation: Pearson. The University maintains responsibility for the standards of awards on the three programmes the College delivers, and ensures that programmes are designed in compliance with the FHEQ. The University ensures learning outcomes are aligned to the appropriate level of the FHEQ, that qualification awards are based on the achievement of these learning outcomes, and that they take account of qualification characteristics. Responsibility for the Higher National programmes rests with Pearson, which, through its system of external examiners, ensures qualifications are allocated at the appropriate level of the Qualification and Curriculum Framework. The College supports these processes through formative and mid-course assessment aligned to the Pearson processes.

1.2 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff and scrutiny of programme specifications, external examiner and external verifier reports. A close working relationship with the University enables the College to comply with processes for aligning learning outcomes and awards with qualification descriptors. Pearson's external verifiers are generally satisfied with the grades given by the College and on the minority of occasions when this is not the case, the College takes appropriate corrective action.

1.3 The College claims that staff are supported in their understanding and application of credit frameworks, subject benchmarks and so on through staff development sessions and the appraisal process. The review team found no evidence of formally arranged staff development in the 2013-14 Training and Development Plan, the guide to observers in the Lesson Observation Policy, or the guide to appraisers. Yet staff are experienced and have been consistent, with continuing familiarity with the FHEQ ensured by awarding partner briefings and contact with external examiners.

1.4 Teaching staff are familiar with the FHEQ through their attendance at awarding body briefings and through discussion in appraisals. The review team found that programmes are set at the correct level and take account of qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements. The team concludes that the strength of the awarding body and organisation processes and the readiness of the College to comply with them mean this Expectation is met and the 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**

1.5 The University and Pearson have different frameworks and regulations with which the College must comply. For programmes validated by the University, students are bound by its comprehensive frameworks and regulations. For courses leading to Higher National awards, Pearson sets out general principles for the operation of its programmes, but requires Centres to develop their own regulations; possibilities are outlined in a suggested Centre Handbook.

1.6 The College has a number of policy documents and procedures dealing with, among other things, assessment, exams and exams malpractice. Responsibilities for managing the College's academic frameworks and regulations are allocated to senior staff, including responsibility for the Higher Education Strategy. The Higher Education College Committee has oversight of all higher education programmes at the College. These arrangements, alongside those of the awarding body and organisation, indicate that the College meets the Expectation in theory.

1.7 The review team tested the Expectation in discussion with senior staff, teaching staff and students, and by evaluating academic regulations, policies and procedures both of the College and its awarding body/organisation. The relationship with the awarding body and organisation is transparent and clearly understood by students. To evaluate the College's academic governance arrangements, the review team sought to understand the effectiveness of the Higher Education College Committee through a review of minutes and in discussion with senior staff.

1.8 The review team notes that the posts of Assistant Principal Quality and the Head of Quality, Performance and Standards are currently vacant with responsibilities covered by other staff. Risk arises from over-stretch within senior management and from the absence of specialist input and understanding at policy and executive levels. The allocation of key responsibilities for higher education programmes to a specific head of school is a positive step, but suggests there is no dedicated voice representing higher education on the College's Senior Management Team, particularly given that the Higher Education Strategy refers to the expansion of programmes.

1.9 To evaluate the College's academic governance arrangements, the review team sought to understand the effectiveness of the Higher Education College Committee, through a review of minutes and in discussion with senior staff. The 2010 QAA review report noted that the 'terms of reference for the (Higher Education) Committee indicate that in the future a more strategic emphasis will be placed on higher education matters' but on the evidence available, the review team judges this emphasis is not yet fully in place.

1.10 Only one of the nine terms of reference of the Committee shows a more strategic emphasis; that is, the Committee is required 'to receive...an annual report' on the implementation of the College's framework for quality assurance in the higher education programmes, 'to identify any issues that require further consideration and make appropriate recommendations'. Others fall short of this. The terms of reference require the Committee to consider and make recommendations for the approval of new awards but there is no

requirement to involve this senior higher education academic committee in the development or approval of a curriculum strategy. The relationship between the Committee and the Course Approval Boards described by the College is also not articulated in the Committee's terms of reference or the document provided by the College describing the course approval process. Finally, the Committee is required 'to ensure central oversight of external examiner reports' but this stipulation defines no specific responsibility for identifying issues, making recommendations or monitoring action.

1.11 Minutes of the Higher Education College Committee recorded predominantly operational matters, with strategic issues playing only a minor role. The terms of reference state meetings should be held termly, but the Committee met twice in the spring term, and six times in the summer term. The terms of reference list the three chairs of the Higher Education Course Committees as members but, based on the minutes provided, they have not attended in 2014. Provision is made for a student member, but senior staff seemed unaware of this and attendance so far has been limited to staff. The terms of reference specify that the Committee provides oversight of external examiner reports and receive the College-level self-evaluation document, but this is not evident in the minutes. These findings demonstrate weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance arrangements, which leads the review team to conclude the Expectation is not met. Weakness in the operation of this part of the College's academic governance structure is pronounced and has an impact in relation to Expectations B1 and B6; the risk is therefore moderate. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure the Higher Education College Committee fulfils its terms of reference, to provide effective strategic leadership and oversight of higher education by March 2015.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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**

1.12 Responsibility for maintaining the definitive record of each of the programmes lies with the awarding body and organisation. The College makes use of programme specifications provided by the University and Pearson. This is articulated in the partnership agreement and instructions to centres. Definitive information about courses and modules is contained in programme specifications and handbooks. The College examines programme and course records and documentation as part of its quality assurance processes in the Quality Tracking Calendar, and Self-Assessment Report. These arrangements ensure that the College meets the Expectation in theory.

1.13 The review team tested the procedures by examining relevant handbooks, reports, course specifications and module guides, and in meetings with academic and senior staff. Analysis of the VLE determined whether definitive information is communicated to students.

1.14 The awarding body and organisation provide course-level information used by students throughout their studies. Module guides provided for the University programmes communicate learning outcomes, the module syllabus and modes of assessment. Students have not seen programme specifications but are satisfied with the information they receive at module level from the College. The students on the University programme understood how their 2+2 programme allowed progression to the University for completion of their degree.

1.15 The College's self-evaluation processes, external examiner and verifier reports, and the process of review by its awarding body and organisation ensure that programme information is maintained as a definitive reference point for delivery of the programmes. In addition, the College uses programme specifications in its internal course self-evaluation processes.

1.16 The team found inconsistencies in definitive programme information available to students, in particular the information regarding assessment policies and regulations. This led to some local practice, for example in arrangements for referrals and resubmissions on some programmes, which represented a risk to the equitable treatment of students across the Higher National programmes. This is a risk identified by the awarding organisation's requirement A3.4 that centres have 'assessment recording documentation that is clearly understood by assessors and learners and utilised consistently across the centre for internal and external assessments as appropriate'. Further, 'The Head of Centre must ensure that your centre acts in accordance with our terms and conditions of approval, by:...providing full and fair access to assessment, maintaining full and accurate records of assessment'. The lack of consistent information about assessment regulations across Higher National programmes supports a recommendation in paragraph 2.53 of this report.

1.17 The team received Pearson's BTEC qualification specifications for the Higher National courses but no programme specifications local to the College. This is contrary to Pearson's requirement that BTEC programmes must have a programme specification.



1.18 The team concludes that the Expectation is met because the awarding body and organisation provide the definitive reference points for the delivery of programme information, and the College's practice of including programme specifications in its self-evaluation process is an arrangement that is broadly adequate. There is a moderate risk because there are shortcomings in the rigour with which the Pearson procedures are applied.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.19 The College uses and is dependent on the awarding body's and awarding organisation's approval processes for new programmes. The awarding body and awarding organisation are responsible for setting and maintaining the academic standards of new programmes. The University makes arrangements to maintain standards during delivery, through verification and moderation of assessment and appointing external examiners. The College has delegated responsibility to maintain standards during the delivery of Pearson courses by setting and internally verifying assessments with oversight by an external verifier who samples student work to check that assessment is aligned to learning outcomes.

1.20 The College introduced its own course approval process following agreement by the senior management team (SMT) in July 2014. A form requesting new higher education qualifications is completed by the appropriate Head of School. SMT convenes a course approval board consisting of senior managers in curriculum and quality and a representative from the governing body, but no external representatives. Since its inception, the process has been used once to seek approval for a HNC in General Engineering, at a panel meeting which included an external representative from an awarding body. The approval board declined the course on the grounds that the approval documents needed more information; consequently, the College recruited no students to the course for 2014-15.

1.21 This course approval process and the operational implementation of assessment with respect to academic standards as described by the College meet the Expectation in theory. The team reviewed documentation available from the College and the awarding body and organisation, and met students and staff from the College and the University.

1.22 The University programmes at the College run in accordance with a partnership agreement dated 2 February 2009, which includes some courses that are no longer running. Under the 2+2 arrangement, BA in Social Studies students complete two years of study at Level 4 with the College equivalent to the first year of the full-time degree, before progressing to the University to complete the programme in two further years. The College has run the programme for 24 years, which is a clear indication of the maturity of the relationship between the College and the University. The College anticipates a partnership agreement review and programme re-approval event during 2015-16.

1.23 External examiner reports confirm that the academic standards of the University's courses at the College are set at an appropriate level and that students are academically well prepared for their progression to the University. External verifier reports confirm that the academic standards for the approved programmes are set at the correct level.

1.24 The team concludes that the awarding body and organisation are responsible for the academic standards of programmes and operate arrangements to approve and re-approve courses that set academic standards at an appropriate level. The College participates adequately in meeting awarding body and organisation requirements to maintain academic standards. When potential issues regarding the maintenance of academic standards have been identified, the College's procedures and response are sufficient to

ensure that standards are not put at risk. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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**

1.25 The awarding body and organisation set and maintain the academic standards of the programmes delivered by the College. Each has processes independent of the College for designing and approving their programmes. The University retains responsibility for the approval of syllabi, assessment, examination papers and marking arrangements. It appoints external examiners and determines exam results. The College designs assessments for the 2+2 programme. It internally verifies and marks such assignments which are subsequently moderated by the awarding body. The University provides assignment briefs for the diploma programme. Both of the University's programmes are assessed in accordance with its assessment regulations which meet threshold academic standards.

1.26 For its Higher National programmes, the College designs and internally verifies assessments which are moderated by the external verifier. External verifiers also confirm that the delivery and standards of the programmes at the College accord with their expectations. The College refers to its own assessment policy and Pearson's regulations for Higher National awards.

1.27 The team determined that the processes for assessment for the University awards meet the Expectation in theory. Processes for assessing the Higher National awards do not fully comply with Pearson's requirement to develop and publish its own assessment regulations. The College's original assessment policy and its revised assessment policy provide aims, objectives and responsibilities without detail of how these objectives will be delivered, beyond the procedures listed in the appendices. The assessment policy does not provide the level of detail expected of assessment regulations, and no regulations were provided by the College.

1.28 The team tested this Expectation through reviewing assessment policies provided by the College and its awarding body and organisation. It also met senior staff, teaching staff and students on both the Higher National and University programmes.

1.29 The HE College Committee meets each term. It is within its terms of reference to ensure the standards of awards and the quality of the students' learning opportunities. However, issues related to quality and standards do not appear as standard agenda items for these meetings and are not routinely discussed, or recorded as discussed, in Committee minutes.

1.30 The College holds meetings three times a year to moderate marked assessments. These moderation days consist of the scrutiny of assessed work in the morning session, and higher education staff development in the afternoon. Although external examiners for the 2+2 BA in Social Studies do not visit the College, they comment favourably about the College students and students' positive influence on the cohort when they progress to the University.

1.31 The College uses Pearson criteria and grade descriptors to assess the achievement of Higher National programme learning outcomes, which take account of UK threshold academic standards. The April 2014 external verifier report for the Business Higher Nationals criticises the assessment verification process and identifies failings in the assessment of unit learning outcomes. Consequently, some assessment decisions were considered inaccurate; assignments originally regarded as achieving distinctions or merits were regarded by the external as referrals. The College rectified these issues by strengthening internal verification and the programme self-evaluation documents recorded further actions to prevent a recurrence. The extent to which the College failed to appropriately identify achievement of learning outcomes on this long-standing programme was significant. The team notes that remedial action focused on changes to internal verification specific to the programme, and not on broader staff training to enhance understanding of the assessment of learning outcomes. This observation supports the recommendation in paragraph 2.54 of this report.

1.32 The team concludes that the College complies with the assessment requirements of its awarding body and for the most part follows the assessment regulations of its awarding organisation, which have proven to be effective. As such, the Expectation is met. However, the lack of unequivocal College assessment regulations represents a shortcoming in the quality assurance procedures and poses a moderate risk which could deteriorate. When issues have been raised by external verifiers, they have been resolved at a local level, not as a matter of staff development. This points to an insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring standards and represents a moderate risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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

1.33 The University is responsible for the design, formal approval and review of its higher education programmes delivered at the College and it monitors this provision through termly meetings, external examiner reports and an annual report from the link tutor. Pearson monitors its provision at the College through external verifiers who visit regularly to sample work and determine if the standard of assessment is appropriate for its awards. As such, the awarding body and organisation have processes which specifically review whether UK threshold academic standards are achieved. The College undertakes annual monitoring of its higher education provision but does not undertake periodic review.

1.34 The College's higher education Quality Academic Cycle provides a framework to assist with managing the quality and standards of its higher education programmes. There is an annual monitoring timetable which is followed by programme teams. This involves the production of reflective self-evaluation documents at course and then College level with associated Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs). The College developed a new style of course and College-level self-evaluation documents for 2013-14 and trained staff in the new process. Self-evaluation documents require programme leaders to consider and respond to external examiner reports, and as such support the maintenance of academic standards. The University's external examiners do not visit the College, but programme teams have an opportunity to engage with them at moderation meetings. Termly Course Review boards enable programme teams to monitor progress against the QIPs, and inform the development of the following year's self-evaluation documents.

1.35 The University, Pearson and College processes for the monitoring and review of programmes meet the Expectation in theory. The team tested the Expectation by evaluating external examiner and verifier reports, self-evaluation documents and QIPs. The team also met senior staff, academic staff and students to determine their understanding of these arrangements.

1.36 The College confirmed that programme review and re-approval would take place during the current academic year for the 2+2 programme and Diploma delivered on behalf of the University. Pearson requires the College's participation in annual quality reviews of the centre but does not stipulate requirements for programme reviews.

1.37 The review team finds that the College produces self-evaluation documents and QIPs in accordance with its published quality cycle. Some self-evaluation documents are inconsistent in their completeness and attention to detail. Some, but not all, analyse student data and make judgements on programme standards and quality. While self-evaluation documents require commentary in response to external examiner reports, these sections are incomplete in the reports for the 2+2 and diploma programmes. The self-evaluation documents for the Higher National programmes include reflections on the report and related action plans. As proof of their effectiveness, the self-evaluation document for the Business programme identifies programme-specific actions in response to issues identified by the external verifier. Programme staff confirmed that their QIPs are monitored at termly Course Review Boards.

1.38 The BA Social Studies 2+2 programme is run by the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning which operates a biennial review of the programme. It covers the student experience, teaching and learning strategies, resources, and support provided by the University. The January 2013 review resolved to hold a follow-up review within 12 months. Staff confirmed that the visit frequency had been increased at the request of the University link tutor due to the significant structural and staffing changes at the College. The follow-up contained 16 recommendations and scheduled a further review for January 2015. The report indicates rigour on the part of the University regarding its review of the College's operation of the programme and the maintenance of academic standards was not raised as a concern.

1.39 The team concludes that the awarding body's, awarding organisation's and College's arrangements for programme monitoring and review are effective and address the achievement of academic standards on the programmes. Based on this, the team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated risk is low: the inconsistencies in the completeness of self-evaluation documents in a small number of instances represent minor oversights that, if addressed, will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

**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**

1.40 The College's awarding body and organisation have arrangements for external oversight of academic standards set, delivered and achieved at the College. The University ensures the use of externality at multiple stages, that is at the approval stage, in the assessment of learning outcomes, and at periodic review. Pearson appoints external verifiers to confirm the assessment of learning outcomes, and the achievement of threshold standards for its awards. In terms of course approval, Pearson provides a qualification specification comprising core and optional modules, from which the College can choose the optional modules to design programmes suitable to its local circumstances. These processes in principle meet the Expectation.

1.41 The review team analysed the awarding body's and organisation's use of externality by evaluating external examiner and verifier reports, and in discussion with senior staff, teaching staff and a link tutor. The College readily complies with the University and Pearson procedures. External examiner and verifier reports demonstrated its effectiveness in maintaining standards.

1.42 The College indicated that the use of external opinion in course approval and the selection of optional elements in the Higher National programmes was provided by the presence of a College Governor - who works for the University - on the Course Approval panel. However, the team judged that the presence of a single serving member of the University could not provide the expertise on relevant national reference points, such as Subject Benchmark Statements, for all subject areas. It does arrange for external input in annual programme review through its use of external examiner and verifier reports.

1.43 The review team concludes that the awarding body and organisations implement processes that ensure the use of external and independent expertise in the management of the academic standards of the College's programmes is solidly embedded at crucial stages. There are issues relating to course approval, but the College capitalises on the use of external and independent expertise in its own programme review arrangements. As such the Expectation is met, and the associated 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 awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.44 In reaching its judgement on the maintenance of the academic standards of awards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.45 The College's awarding body and awarding organisation define its responsibilities for assuring the standards and quality of their programmes. The College delivers higher education programmes at the appropriate levels of the FHEQ. It complies with monitoring and review procedures set by its awarding partners, as well as assessment and verification procedures.

1.46 The review team found that six of the seven Expectations are met. Four of these six Expectations have low associated risk and two are a moderate risk. One of the problems identified relates to the provision of complete assessment regulations for staff and students, which represents a shortcoming in the rigour with which quality assurance procedures are applied. The other identifiable shortcoming relates to staff training on the assessment of learning outcomes, which reflects insufficient emphasis given to assuring standards.

1.47 The review team concluded that Expectation A2.1 is not met because the evidence provided does not demonstrate that the Higher Education College Committee is meeting all its responsibilities specified in its terms of reference, such as appointing its full membership, making recommendations for course approval, and receiving external examiner reports and the College self-evaluation documents. As such, there are doubts over the effectiveness of this Committee and the review team makes a recommendation on this. It indicates a weakness in the College academic governance arrangements so that the Expectation is not met, and the level of risk is moderate.

1.48 In making a judgement on this area, the review team notes that nearly all Expectations have been met, and the unmet Expectation does not present a serious risk to the management of this area. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards **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 and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 The awarding body and organisation are responsible for the design, development and approval of the higher education programmes delivered at the College and retain ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards. The University's programmes delivered by the College undergo formal approval processes and the College runs the programmes in accordance with a 2009 partnership agreement. This agreement covers the option to operate five programmes, of which only two are currently active due to strategic and operational decisions made by the awarding body. College staff were not involved in the design, development and approval of these programmes, which are also delivered across a number of other further education colleges. Pearson does not require the College's involvement in programme design, development and approval, although the College is able to tailor the delivery of its Higher National programmes through the selection of optional units.

2.2 The Higher Education Strategy 2014-16 states the intention to run Higher National courses in Business, Engineering, Photography and Dance as part of a curriculum strengthening and growth strategy for the College. At the time of the review, the College had 29 students enrolled on all but the Engineering Higher National, which has yet to be approved. Broadly, responsibility for oversight of academic standards and quality assurance at the College rests with the Higher Education Committee. Its terms of reference include the requirement 'to consider and make recommendations to (the senior management team) for the approval of new awards'. This process for programme design, development and approval meets the Expectation in theory. The review team discussed programme design, development and approval with senior staff and teaching staff, a University link tutor and students. It evaluated one documented example of programme approval taking place in the College and considered committee minutes.

2.3 Re-approval of the University's 2+2 programme is due in the next academic year and discussions regarding the College's potential involvement have yet to take place. The College has not previously been involved in the design or development of the 2+2 and diploma programmes.

2.4 The Pearson centre arrangements enable the College to adjust its Higher National programme portfolio. It closed HNCs in Visual Communication and Music Production in the last year, and advertised HNCs in General Engineering, Photography and Performing Arts for the current academic year. Due to the timing of its introduction, a new course approval template had only been used once prior to the review visit, to seek approval for the HNC in General Engineering. An approval panel convened by the College referred this proposal for programme approval back to the Construction and Engineering School for further revisions as the programme had not recruited. This, alongside the critically evaluative comments provided by the approval panel, represents an adequate process for programme approval. However, despite its specific remit to consider the approval of new awards, the College did not involve the Higher Education College Committee in this approval process. The

Committee's failure to maintain oversight of course approval signals the Committee's lack of strategic leadership and management of underlying quality processes. This shortcoming contributes to the recommendation in paragraph 1.10 of this report.

2.5 The team found that the programme approval template made available by the College demonstrates evidence of a process, but it is unclear how the College defines the process or where it is documented beyond information provided at the foot of the template. In discussions, the College informed the review team that proposals start at Course Committees and are developed in 'development committees' before they are presented to the Higher Education Committee, but this process is not recorded in a formal programme approval procedure. The College delivered a one-hour staff training session on the new programme approval process, but records of the training are limited and lack detail. Although the approval panel has only been convened once, there are no minutes recording the meeting and the programme team received annotations against their proposal documents. The team concludes that the approval process is not systematic or consistent in its operation. Roles and responsibilities for the individuals and committees involved are unclear and the method by which staff were informed of the new process was opaque. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise, document and train staff in course approval processes by May 2015.

2.6 The College informed the team that course approval panels include an external member, but also noted this external was also a member of the College's Board of Governors, which does not demonstrate complete independence from the College. The role of this external member is limited to the approval stage, and does not include the design and development of programmes. The review team **recommends** that the College use appropriate external expertise in the design and development of programmes by May 2015.

2.7 The review team concludes that the HE College Committee does not demonstrate strategic oversight of its programme design and approval processes. The team found shortcomings in the way in which the programme approval process is documented and implemented. The process lacks independent external expertise in programme design and development. Taking account of these issues, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met. The associated risk is moderate because of the College's insufficient emphasis given to assuring quality in its processes.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission***

**Findings**

2.8 The College and the University take shared responsibility for the recruitment and selection of students, as laid out in their partnership agreement. The University reviews this arrangement biannually. The College is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students to the courses awarded by Pearson. The College provides information about courses, resources, and what students can expect on its website and also holds recruitment days. Prospective higher education students progressing from lower-level programmes delivered by the College are required to make an application as specified in an internal progression policy. The College maintains no formal entry requirements for its higher education programmes but expects prospective students to demonstrate an aptitude to study at this level. Admission is subject to the course criteria being met as specified on the College website. Admissions, selection and recruitment procedures are overseen and monitored in the College and data is discussed at Senior Management Team level. Such arrangements indicate the Expectation is met in principle.

2.9 The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions procedure in meetings with students, teaching staff and support staff. The review team scrutinised admission guidance given to staff, and the documentation demonstrating the implementation admissions policies and procedures.

2.10 The review team concludes that the College's admissions policy for higher education programmes is fit for purpose. Recent updates to the admissions policy are underpinned by a clear rationale and approved by the Senior Management Team. The admissions policy does not apply to international students and there is no separate policy covering this type of recruitment and admission. The College is developing a policy for international students and is able to check qualification equivalency. The admissions process is clearly articulated.

2.11 Students confirmed that they found the application and admission process straightforward, although a minority of students noted problems with contacting people from the College to obtain clarification on information about the courses prior to application. These students said that, as a consequence, they experienced delays in their access to financial support of their studies. Students confirmed they received sufficient information from the awarding body and organisation prior to enrolment.

2.12 The admissions policy is monitored at several levels within the College. The Assistant Principal Student and Learning Services reviews it annually. The Performance and Quality team monitors students' experience of the admissions process through written feedback and surveys. The Admissions and Enrolment Working Group oversee the efficacy of the admission system and processes and the Senior Management Team monitors its reports. Senior Management Team meetings discuss data regarding admissions and acceptances to higher education programmes and identify actions in response. The Higher Education Committee oversees the number of applications. Minimum entry qualifications are considered at College course approval panels.

2.13 Prospective students are supported through the application and admission procedure by professional support staff, although academic staff maintain responsibility for admissions decisions. In approving or rejecting applications, staff take account of the entry criteria, and assess students' aptitude for study by considering the style and content of the application, interviewing students, requesting references and setting pre-entry assignments. The review team examined the initial assessment activity given to students and found that it was appropriate. Recognition of prior learning is embedded in the College's admissions policy and the College uses its awarding organisation's guidance on prior learning.

2.14 Professional support staff keep information for prospective students up to date; they maintain records, track applications and create admissions reports. Students with a declared physical or learning disability are supported by the Additional Learning Support Team. Students confirmed that they knew where to access learning support and how to 'flag up' any learning needs that they had, both with the College and with the partner institution, throughout the admissions process.

2.15 The admissions policy makes reference to the right of appeal, the full details of which are in the College's Complaints and Appeals policy, available separately on the website. The College confirmed that it had not received any appeals against application decisions.

2.16 The review team concludes that the College's policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admissions operate effectively and that students receive support from the College through the application and admission process. As such, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.17 The College sets out its approach to teaching and learning in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14. This is supported by a number of other strategies, such as the e-Learning Strategy, the Lesson Observation Policy and the Assessment Policy. The theme of the current Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14 is teaching performance, linked directly to the Lesson Observation Policy. By adopting these strategies and policies, the College aims to provide students with consistent and equal opportunities, further supported by the Equality and Diversity Policy. The College states that its cross-College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy is informed in part by an analysis of Ofsted reports. As part of the College's recently developed Quality Improvement Cycle 2014-15, self-evaluation documents completed by course leaders and the mid-course student surveys culminate in a College Self-Assessment Report, reviewed at corporate level, which in principle can drive strategic change.

2.18 A Training and Development Plan aims to ensure staff have the opportunity to update and reflect on their practice and the College's practices. These reflections are also part of staff annual appraisals. Staff teaching on the University programmes also benefit from staff development sessions led by the University.

2.19 The College uses course handbooks and the VLE to inform students of the frameworks for learning. This information is supported by extensive informal contact between students and teachers. When necessary, staff refer students to a range of learning support services. The College has introduced an online system to enable students both to record their learning progress and communicate with staff. Broadly, these policies and frameworks meet the Expectation in principle; they provide a structure, within the College's plainly strongly student-centred ethos, that enables students to develop as learners and study their chosen subjects in depth. The review team tested these policies, frameworks and teachings processes through a review of strategies, minutes of College and awarding body meetings, information on the College's website and VLE, course self-evaluation documents, programme handbooks and module guides, assignment feedback sheets, and course survey results. The review team also discussed the approach to learning and teaching in meetings with students, and senior, academic and support staff.

2.20 The College's strategies, procedures and staffing structure provide a framework for learning and teaching. The vacant posts noted in paragraph 1.8 indicate a low risk to the assurance of quality in this area. The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14 is a cross-College strategy without a specific higher education section but it aims to foster elements of learning and teaching which are important in higher education, such as supporting students to become active, independent and evaluative learners. The Strategy's objectives focus on improving teaching through peer observations, complemented by the Lesson Observation Policy. The e-Learning Strategy 2014-16 is again a cross-College strategy which aims to use new technology to promote independent learning and is therefore beneficial for higher education students. The College confirmed that the use of information and learning technology is an important part of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, with an anticipated increase in the proportion of teaching delivered

this way from 10 to 50 per cent in the medium term, as part of a commitment to responding to government guidance on best practice. The College's specific Higher Education Strategy 2014-16 aligns with this strategy and others, and includes specific objectives related to teaching, the student experience, learning opportunities, and the use of information and learning technology. The review team sought to understand how exactly the Higher Education Strategy was developed and its objectives understood. There is a sense generally that strategies are developed by senior management with little input from the higher education academic community; minutes from the HE College Committee note that progress on the Higher Education Strategy is being made elsewhere.

2.21 The approach to learning and teaching is strongly influenced by the College's higher education partnerships. Students on the University's programmes benefit from the College's close partnership with the University and the University's influence. Those studying towards Higher National awards benefit from the integrity and quality of the course specifications developed by Pearson and the associated support for teachers. The College supports equal and effective learning opportunities in both partnerships through its Lesson Observation Policy. This policy has a strong and formal ethos, with teaching graded on a four-point scale from outstanding to inadequate, but it includes no definitions of these four standards. Notwithstanding this, the team found that the College and individual teaching staff work to ensure activities and resources are accessible to all students and that students are supported to take advantage of all opportunities. This is under the aegis of the College's Equality and Diversity Policy and its Additional Learning Support Policy.

2.22 The College has a small number of higher education teaching staff proportionate to its student numbers and permanent staff are in the majority. The College pursues an integrated and stable approach to staffing programmes, with teachers working consistently on existing courses for a number of years, and new courses taught by staff with a proven track record. Just over half of the teaching staff are qualified to master's level. The College has a policy of supporting staff teaching on higher education programmes who wish to register for PhDs or otherwise improve their subject knowledge. During the review, the team saw and heard little about how the College encourages scholarly activity to inform teaching practice. The Higher Education Strategy acknowledges that quality depends on offering teaching staff opportunities for research and scholarly activity that directly lead to improvements in 'teaching and learning and the vocational relevance and currency of the curriculum offer'. In practice, the emphasis is on enhancing the vocational relevance of programmes and less on the currency of the offer. The team found innovative work on vocational relevance, for example in the Theatre in Education sections of the HNC Performing Arts. However, the College depends on its partners to ensure the currency of courses.

2.23 The College's Training, Development and Support Plan provides further professional support. Staff teaching courses leading to University awards benefit from dedicated training sessions in the Plan and from regular Review and Development meetings organised by the University. Details of attendance within the College's Plan suggest that most of the sessions are cross-College rather than specific to higher education. The College held a Higher Education Day in 2013-14, bringing together higher education teaching staff to discuss learning and teaching. The record of this session indicates that it covered relevant topics related to operational aspects of learning and teaching with little evidence of opportunity for reflection on higher education.

2.24 Information on learning opportunities and teaching practices is collected through the self-evaluation process and mid-course surveys. The Quality Tracking Calendar provides guidance on processes which feed into the College's Performance Monitoring Framework. Information from lesson observations enables managers to monitor learning and teaching. These processes provide an effective feed of information into high-level evaluation of

performance. It is less clear whether an evaluation of this information takes place at the Higher Education College Committee. The team was unable to ascertain the effectiveness of the new Courses Committees, as they had not met prior to the review.

2.25 Students benefit from new teaching facilities designed to support specific disciplines such as photography and performing arts. Students informed the team that the library had improved in recent years and that they are encouraged to use a combination of both the College and University library facilities. The College library has journals available, electronic resources and information on study skills such as Harvard referencing. The College has a higher education Common Room which brings higher education students together and creates a stronger sense of identity and knowledge sharing. A general standard for the use of all resources is set out in a Positive Behaviour and Student Disciplinary Policy. Students confirmed the learning environment for higher education students was entirely satisfactory, with students in Performing Arts benefiting from facilities shared with the College's further education provision. Those studying for University awards can access facilities at the local University campus. The student submission suggests that library provision at the College is sufficient, and complemented by access to the University of Warwick and Coventry University libraries.

2.26 The College uses a VLE which supports blended learning in line with the College's strategic aims. There are two Learning Resource Centres which provide access to computers, software and digital resources. The College is further developing digital resources for learning and teaching under the auspices of its e-Learning strategy, Innovation and Technology within the Learning Environment Strategy 2014-16. This includes a thorough action plan with clear targets. The Strategy responds to negative feedback on the present VLE, also noted in the student submission. The Higher Education Strategy also responds to this feedback and refers to enhancing 'students' learning opportunities by embracing new learning technologies and managed learning environments'. The team's review of the VLE showed that the provision of information on course sites varied with some, but not all, well populated. The College has no set minimum content for course sites but it has a strong will and strategic imperative to improve consistency.

2.27 Students confirm that they are informed of what the College expects of them through a general student handbook and College charter incorporating an agreement between students and the College on their respective rights and responsibilities. Students additionally receive course handbooks covering academic and student support issues. These are the principal means by which the College specifies the learning opportunities and support available to students. Handbooks provided for University courses are full and follow the University's style. The team found that handbooks are produced to conflicting templates which course teams are required to use. An example from one of the newest courses shows, however, that this 'template' is being followed so consistency between handbooks is increasing. However, the review team judged that the handbooks lack the kind of information drawn from programme specifications and regulations, envisaged in Part C of the Quality Code, and which would be common in most higher education institutions. This supports the recommendation in paragraph 3.10.

2.28 Students confirmed that they value support from lecturers, their accessibility and the small size of classes. This corresponds with the outcomes of mid-course feedback surveys which provide opportunities for students to monitor their progress, reflect on feedback and engage with staff. The feedback sheet template is comprehensive and enables students to understand their progress, and is the basis for further discussion. The progress tutor system helps students plan their programme and review progress on a regular basis.

2.29 The College's policies, procedures and frameworks support the delivery of effective learning and teaching. Students confirm that they value the learning, teaching and



opportunities provided by the College and that they are supported to develop as independent learners and enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.30 The College's aims for enabling student achievement are embodied in a series of cross-College strategies, such as the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, the e-Learning Strategy, and Tutorial Policy. Responsibility for the management of student development and achievement is within the portfolios of three Assistant Principals working to the Deputy Principal, Learning. The Higher Education Strategy articulates teaching and learning aims and objectives specific to higher education, with operational responsibility for all higher education programmes allocated to the Head of Business, Professional, Information Technology and Teacher Training. Assistant Principals have direct managerial responsibility for many aspects of student support and enabling student achievement, with oversight of guidance and information services, additional learning support, information and learning technology, and learning resources. A key aspect of the strategic approach here is a commitment to equity in the provision of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14 and the Equality and Diversity Policy. The College has a culture of regular reporting and evaluation demonstrated at the highest level by the Governors' Dashboard and worked through with a detailed course-level self-evaluation process.

2.31 Higher education provision in the College aims to facilitate progression, and is formalised in the Internal Progression Policy and Higher Education Strategy. The development of subject-based skills aligned to course learning outcomes is supported by a provision which enables students to develop more generic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and critical thinking. The Additional Support Unit, working to the College Additional Learning Support Policy, provides much of this enabling support.

2.32 The College's strategies and policies provide a direction and framework for staff to enable student development and achievement. The College has clearly allocated responsibilities for enabling students to develop their academic personal and professional potential. These arrangements provide for the Expectation to be met in principle. The review team tested the Expectation in discussion with academic, senior and support staff, and with students. The team evaluated the College's strategies, policies, minutes of committees, student handbooks, the College Charter, and course self-evaluation documents.

2.33 The process of setting strategy in the College appears effective in areas of teaching and learning as elsewhere. The team's review of the College strategies confirmed they are fit for purpose in the area of teaching and learning and the College is intent on enabling student development and achievement. The results can be seen, for example, in the College Charter. The College's management structure for both academic and student support services is coherent in fostering student learning. The College has a culture of self-evaluation with information on learning and teaching actively considered at all levels from the Governors' Dashboard downwards. The course self-evaluation process works well and synthesises comments from staff-student committees and student surveys, and takes account of external opinion. The Higher Education College Committee is remitted to discuss these reports but discussion of self-evaluation reports is not revealed in its meetings to date.

2.34 The review team finds that the College carries through its aims to support student progression. Staff and students confirm that higher education provision in the College facilitates progression for students exiting level 3 in the College. Some of these students value the opportunity to begin their higher education in a familiar environment, to overcome

their uncertainties. The Pearson programmes at the College readily enable progression from HNCs to vocational opportunities or further study with another provider. The University 2+2 programme enables students to begin studying in a small and supportive environment, building students' academic confidence so that they can progress to complete their degree at the University. The partnership with the University for the 2+2 programme and the Diploma in Education and Training is impressive. There is a close and strong partnership, exemplified by close and constructive working relations and the College's readiness to engage in annual review outside of the University's normal arrangements because of staffing changes. Matters relating to documentation, briefing, training and assessment are well managed. Students are enthusiastic about the partnership and the opportunities it provides them to use the University facilities and to progress there, as such enabling them to achieve their ambitions. The review team identifies as **good practice** the integration of provision for the 2+2 programmes which enables a smooth transition from the College to the awarding body for the final years.

2.35 The College provides a range of transitional support for students entering higher education. Students' maths and English skills are screened upon admission and this is used to identify support needs and can result in plans for individual learners. This initial literacy and maths testing forms a part of the ongoing assessment of learner needs. Induction activities include an introduction to the library and College resources, as well as to the e-learning platform. Induction plans for higher education students are made at the higher education meeting. Student satisfaction is monitored early in the academic year through a cross-College 'first impressions' survey and report. The report is benchmarked against other colleges. It reveals variations in student satisfaction, particularly between schools, including those that do not deliver higher education. The College uses this to identify areas for improvement and assign responsibility to staff to improve and monitor these areas.

2.36 The Equality and Diversity Policy identifies actions in a range of areas and sets targets in relation to the curriculum offer and styles of teaching. The College is accredited as an Investor in Diversity. A high level of commitment to equality and diversity is seen in the Positive Behaviour and Student Disciplinary Policy, in which equity is the central aim. College policies and procedures are subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

2.37 The review team found that the Additional Support Unit is fulfilling the aims of the College's Additional Learning Support Policy. The Unit provides assessments for students' additional support needs at regular points, for example upon admission. Students may refer themselves for further support, or be referred by their lecturer. Students also have regular meetings with a designated progress tutor who can also make referrals. Referrals are logged by staff and students on an online system which shares information with those who need to provide additional support to a student. Support services such as the Additional Support Unit produce annual Self-Evaluation Documents in parallel to those produced for academic programmes. Students confirmed that these processes and services work well, for example to diagnose and support dyslexia.

2.38 Overall, the review team found that the positive judgements on teaching, learning and support that they heard from students were well founded. The Expectation is thus met and the risk low.

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

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

#### **Findings**

2.39 The College's approach to student engagements is set out in a Student Engagement Strategy, overseen by the Senior Management Team and subject to annual review and approval. The College has a number of approaches in place to gather student views, both formal and informal: small class sizes allow for a continuous exchange to take place on course delivery between staff and students. The College also uses module and course evaluations. For students studying on University programmes, the College's internal procedures supporting student engagement operate alongside those of the University, which has complementary staff-student liaison committee meetings chaired by a University representative. The HE College Committee includes two student representatives in the membership given in its terms of reference. In addition, the College has a Student Liaison Committee, attended by senior members of the College staff.

2.40 Enabling students to contribute to their learning experience is embedded in the College's Higher Education Strategy. Student satisfaction is seen as a key performance indicator. The College has a learner voice timeline, articulated within the Student Council Constitution 2014-15; this seeks to ensure that students' views are gathered and articulated throughout the academic cycle, as does the Quality Improvement Cycle 2014-15. These arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle. The review team tested this Expectation through discussions with students and senior and teaching staff. The review team also evaluated the implementation of the Student Engagement Strategy, relevant aspects of the Higher Education Strategy and scrutinised minutes of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, module questionnaires, the quality improvement cycle, student handbooks and course self-evaluation documents.

2.41 The College has a 'You Said - We Did' process to communicate actions taken in response to student views. These actions are communicated to students through 'You Said - We Did' posters visible in the College. Student feedback is included in course handbooks, which include information about Learner Forums, the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and module evaluations.

2.42 The College hosts HE Student Forums at which students are invited to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. The College also gathers students' views through surveys to gauge the success of College strategies, such as the Tutorial Policy. Students' views feature prominently in course self-evaluation documents and staff receive training in how to gather student feedback using the VLE. Students have attended the Staff-Student Liaison Committee held for the College's 2+2 provision. The terms of reference for committees suggest that students should have representatives at the HE College Committee and at HE Courses Committee. However, the review team found that students had not fulfilled this role. The team **recommends** that, by March 2015, the College encourages and enables effective student representation on committees as set out in the terms of reference.

2.43 Students informed the review team that the College is responsive to the student voice and gave examples, such as the improved wireless connectivity and the new Higher Education Common Room, which had improved access to learning resources and supported a 'higher education ethos'.

2.44 The student voice forms a part of the College's overarching Quality Strategy and there is a clear chain of reporting, from programme level upwards, which relays students' views. Student questionnaires, National Student Survey results, module evaluations and student representative meetings inform course committees, which in turn inform the Course Review self-evaluation documents, managed by Heads of Schools. This then leads into the programme area self-assessment report monitored by the Performance Review Board, and this feeds into the College-wide self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, monitored by the Quality and Performance Committee. Student engagement and learner voice strategies are discussed at the College's Higher Education day. Module feedback is also discussed at meetings with the awarding body and organisation.

2.45 The College has a student representation system and has recently moved to electing, instead of nominating, student representatives. These students have not received formal training from the College on gathering information from their peers or on participating in committees, although the students with whom the team met expressed an interest in and a desire for this. The College has made plans for such training and the review team **affirms** the steps taken to deliver student representative training.

2.46 The review team finds that the tutorial system allows for tutors and students to build strong feedback relationships, as encouraged in the Tutorial Policy. The team also found effective mechanisms in place to capture student views, such as end-of-module reviews, which inform course-level self-evaluations. Student feedback is evidently discussed at committee level and the team heard examples of how the College has responded rapidly and effectively to meet students' needs. In light of these arrangements and the positive feedback from students regarding the responsiveness of the College and the strength of the College's existing mechanisms for gathering student views, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.47 The Assistant Principal Quality is responsible for monitoring assessment procedures and standards across the College. The Assistant Principle Curriculum chairs the Higher Education Committee which is responsible for debating and deciding on the College's framework for higher education quality assurance policies and procedures that are ultimately approved by the Senior Management Team.

2.48 Assessment of learning outcomes for the 2+2 and Diploma programmes is conducted in accordance with the awarding body's code of practice. The College conducts assessment on Higher National programmes according to the College's Assessment Policy and guidance available from the awarding organisation. The College relies on the awarding body's and awarding organisation's processes for the recognition of prior learning.

2.49 College staff draft assessments for the 2+2 programme which are then confirmed by the University. The assessment tasks for the Diploma programme are provided by the University. In each case, College staff mark and internally verify student work prior to attending moderation meetings with staff from the University. These meetings are held three times per year with the external examiner attending the final meeting and the examination board. The examination board is convened and chaired by the awarding body. The College designs, conducts and marks Higher National programme assessments and these are moderated by the external verifier. The College formally convenes Higher National programme examination boards that may be attended by the external verifier. The College provides guidelines for teaching staff on academic malpractice, including plagiarism and collusion, which notes that higher education students are governed by their respective awarding body and awarding organisation regulations.

2.50 Students are provided with information on assessment and good academic practice in programme handbooks. Assignment briefs include the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Students receive feedback on their assessments on a template sheet which identifies strengths and weaknesses, and provides advice on how to improve the work. The College uses the annual course self-evaluation process to enhance the assessment process.

2.51 The processes of assessment and the recognition of prior learning meet the Expectation in theory. In reaching its final conclusions the team considered documentation available from the awarding body and organisation, student handbooks, assignment briefs, self-evaluation documents, the College Assessment Policy, a draft Assessment and Verification Policy and Procedures document, and external examining reports. The team also discussed the Expectations in meetings with senior and teaching staff, a link tutor, and students.

2.52 The College adheres to the University's assessments policies, regulations and processes, including its Code of Practice on Assessment, when conducting assessment for the 2+2 and Diploma programmes. Student handbooks produced by the awarding body provide appropriate information on assessment. The measures in place to design and

conduct assessment are robust and prepare students well for their transition to the University.

2.53 The review team explored how the College conducted the assessment of Higher National programmes. During the review the College provided a new draft Assessment and Verification Policy and Procedures document intended to supersede an existing Assessment Policy which covered both higher education and further education provision, and a separate BTEC Assessment Policy. These documents lack specific detail on the assessment process. For example, the Assessment Policy does not provide specific guidance on the referral processes or information on the number of reassessments permitted. It is unclear whether there are limits placed on the maximum mark that can be achieved upon reassessment. In accordance with the *BTEC Centre Guidance to Assessment: Level 4-7* published by Pearson, the College is expected to develop and publish its own assessment regulations relating to BTEC Higher National programmes that conform to the Quality Code.

2.54 Teaching staff informed the team that referral processes and practices are developed locally within Schools and that there was no cross-College policy. Teaching staff confirmed that they consult each other informally on the referral processes that they implement. The review team found that this localised practice and lack of College oversight could result in variable, inequitable and therefore unreliable treatment of student work during the assessment process. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure assessment regulations are compliant with awarding organisation guidelines and accessible to staff and students by September 2015. The information provided to Higher National students on assessment processes in the student handbooks is primarily limited to grade boundary thresholds, which is in stark contrast to the comprehensive information available on assessment and provided to the students at the College on University programmes. Handbooks for Higher National programmes lack information on the implications of late submissions, resubmissions and referrals although one had more detailed information than others on referrals.

2.55 The development of local processes and practices for referrals for Higher National students points to a lack of College oversight of referral practices and indicates that staff lack the information they need to undertake their role. In addition, in section A3.2 of this report, the team notes that the College received criticism from an external verifier on the internal verification process and that the College's remedial response, though swift, focused on amending the internal verification process for that programme and not on the broader staff training to enhance understanding of the assessment of learning outcomes. Taking both these issues into account, the team found a risk in the lack of College oversight for ensuring that staff are competent to undertake their role in assessment, and **recommends** that the College provide staff training on assessment policies and processes by September 2015.

2.56 The terms of reference of the Higher Education College Committee include a function to debate and decide the College's framework for quality assurance policy and procedures as it affects higher education provision. Such debate is not evident from the minutes of its meetings. The most recent draft of the Assessment and Verification Policy and Procedures indicate that it is only considered for approval by the Senior Management Team. The terms of reference of the Higher Education Committee also include central oversight of external examiner reports, but minutes do not confirm that they have been discussed at meetings to date. The Committee's departure from its terms of reference risks its effectiveness and ability to provide leadership and oversight of higher education in the College. This contributed to the recommendation in paragraph 1.10 of this report.

2.57 The review team concludes that, in the provision of Higher National programmes, the College's assessment regulations does not meet those required by the awarding organisation. This has led to the development of local practice on referrals which, with the

lack of College oversight, could result in inequitable, variable and unreliable approaches to assessment. The review team finds that staff require training on comprehensive assessment policies and processes to enhance their ability to undertake their role. The team finds that the Higher Education Committee is not fulfilling its terms of reference which put at risk its oversight of higher education in the College. Taking these reasons into account, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met. The shortcomings identified relate to weaknesses in the operation of the College's governance structure and insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring quality, and as such represent a moderate risk.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**



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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.58 The nomination and appointment of external examiners, definition of their role, their training and the overall management of their work are the responsibility of the College's awarding body and awarding organisation. Overall responsibility for ensuring academic integrity rests with the Assistant Principal, Curriculum as Chair of the Higher Education College Committee, and the Assistant Principal, Quality. The Assessment Policy and the Examinations Policy and Procedures determine College practices. The College supports the work of external examiners through the provision of samples and information on the assessment and examination process. This responsibility rests with the Examinations Manager who reports to the Assistant Principal for Management Information Systems. The University manages Examination Boards for its courses; the College manages Examination Boards for Pearson courses.

2.59 External examiners work to the protocols of the awarding body and awarding organisation, and prepare reports sent to the College. These are scrutinised by the Assistant Principal, Quality, the Head of School responsible for Higher Education, and the programme team. The programme team acts on any immediate issues and records responses in the course self-evaluation document. Responsibility for central oversight of external examiner reports and the identification of any themes is in the terms of reference of the Higher Education College Committee.

2.60 These arrangements are of appropriate design and indicate the Expectation is met in principle. The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of external examiner reports, minutes of the HE College Committee, College policies, course self-evaluation documents and committee terms of references. The review team also met staff and students.

2.61 The College supports the work of external examiners through the provision of consistent and accurate information in the assessment and examination process. Evidence of the working of the examination and award process was provided in the form of external examiner reports for all courses, and the minutes of the College Examination Boards for Pearson courses. The review team finds that the processes for assuring standards are sufficient; however, it notes a number of issues. In relation to teaching, assessment and examining the team observed that in one case, for example, the external verifier agreed the grades but commented that the programme team's understanding of Pearson requirements was weak; in another example, the Pearson external verifier referred the majority of the marks back to the College for revision in line with their criteria, to which the College responded by enhancing their internal verification procedure. In relation to the College's Examination Boards the review team judges the minutes to be brief which might indicate that the meetings themselves were similarly cursory. The work of the external examiner is reported but generally without agreed actions for any follow-up.

2.62 Students on the 2+2 programme complete two years at the College before completing a further two years at the University, under an arrangement paralleled by other Colleges in the area. The University's Exam Board for the programme covered candidates from other colleges and as such its report was not specific to the College. Evidence provided by the College included a report of a progression board for a different 2+2 degree that had been phased out, which indicated that consideration of teach-out arrangements was detailed and thorough.

2.63 The review team then considered the use made of external examiners' reports. The course self-evaluation template includes a section to record progress on actions from external reports. In the course self-evaluation documents seen by the team, this section was completed with a small number of exceptions.

2.64 In 2010, the College's QAA review report recommended that the College 'consolidate and extend the terms of reference for the Higher Education Committee so that major issues arising from external examiners' reports...are scrutinised and actions noted'. The College reports that action has been taken in response to the recommendation. The self-evaluation document states that 'terms of reference [are] in place for Higher Education College Committee, Higher Education Course Committee, and exam boards [are] in place twice yearly whereby External Examiner Reports are a standard agenda item. Scrutiny [is] provided by [a] panel'. The review team found that the Higher Education College Committee's Terms of reference included the responsibility to 'ensure central oversight of external examiner reports' which is perhaps ambiguous in not requiring the Committee to exercise the oversight itself. Minutes of the HE College Committee do not provide evidence that external examining has been discussed. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that course external examiner and verifier reports are considered at a senior cross-College level by September 2015.

2.65 In theory, students could be informed of the findings of external examiner reports. Student representatives sit on the Higher Education College Committee and Higher Education Course Committees which by their terms of reference discuss the self-evaluation document for the course. However, the review team found that the newly constituted Higher Education Course Committee had not yet met and student representatives had not yet been invited to the Higher Education College Committee. The course self-evaluation documents, shared with students, only contain recommendations and actions rather than the full report.

2.66 The review team concludes that the College complies with awarding partners' processes for external examining but that it should take steps to ensure cross-College oversight of external examiner reports so that it can identify and respond to themes across discipline areas. This would require the completion of activity already underway to implement the terms of reference of the new Higher Education College Committee. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.67 The College has a formal annual monitoring process. Self-evaluation documents form the basis of the College's monitoring of all its higher education provision and a recently updated pro forma is provided for each programme team to complete. A detailed schedule for the production and consideration of these reports is published annually. These programme-level self-evaluation documents feed up to a College-level, higher education-specific self-evaluation document. According to its terms of reference, this higher education-specific self-evaluation document is received by the HE College Committee.

2.68 The College also participates in the annual monitoring processes of its awarding body and awarding organisation. The 2+2 programme is also subject to a regular review by the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning. Normally conducted on a biennial basis, the University is currently reviewing the College annually as discussed in paragraph 1.37.

2.69 The processes outlined for the monitoring and review of programmes meet the Expectation in theory. The review team explored this by reviewing self-evaluation documents, the quality calendar and minutes of the HE College Committee. The team also discussed the monitoring and review of programmes with staff and a University link tutor.

2.70 The College relies on its awarding body for the approval and periodic review of the University programmes. Beyond its annual monitoring process, the College does not have its own form of periodic review relating to its delivery of higher education programmes and the scope and relevance of the programme portfolio.

2.71 Programme teams produce self-evaluation documents in accordance with the published timetable and reflect on the quality improvement plans that result at Course Review Boards held three times per year. As discussed in paragraph 2.62, there are inconsistencies in the production of self-evaluation documents, and comments from external examiner reports are only recorded in those for Higher National programmes. As discussed in paragraph 2.63, there was no evidence that external examiner reports or self-evaluation documents have been considered by the HE College Committee. The Committee has not yet received a single higher education self-evaluation document that it is remitted to receive.

2.72 The self-evaluation documents consider student surveys and feedback but students themselves are not involved in any deliberative monitoring processes performed by the College. Minutes from student forums are not received at any higher committees. Students pursuing the University programmes participate in programme reviews by meeting representative of the University.

2.73 There is a functional annual monitoring process, albeit with inconsistencies in the presentation of the reports. Programme teams follow the processes set by the College in a timely manner and formally reflect upon the action plans produced. The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low because the College has an adequate process for monitoring its higher education provision and relies on the awarding bodies for programme review.

**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**

2.74 The College has a complaints procedure approved by the Senior Management Team and monitored through the Quality and Performance Committee. Students are advised that they should discuss complaints with their course organiser in the first instance and the Head of School if the matter remains unresolved. Beyond this point students are expected to make a formal written complaint to the Customer Liaison Co-ordinator (CLC) who refers the matter to the relevant Head of School for a formal investigation and response, or if independence is required, the CLC investigates and responds directly. Students can appeal complaint outcomes by writing to the Principal.

2.75 Students on Higher National programmes can access the appeals and complaints processes operated by Pearson and specified in its handbooks for centres. Pearson mandates that students exhaust the College's internal appeals procedure before it receives them.

2.76 For students on the University's programmes, responsibility for academic appeals rests with the University. The College's internal academic appeals procedure sets out that appeals are dealt with on an informal level first, by the lecturer responsible for the assessment. These appeals can progress in turn to the Head of School and the Deputy Principal. As a final recourse, appeals are referred to the awarding body.

2.77 The team found that the College meets the Expectation in principle. The team tested this Expectation in practice in meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and with students. The team evaluated the complaints and appeals process and looked at an example of an appeal. It also considered information available to students in handbooks.

2.78 The complaints process is supported by formal record keeping, with the CLC recording complaints on a spreadsheet. The process is timely and stipulates the time that students can expect to wait for responses at each stage. Students can expect written confirmation of the outcome of formal complaints and appeals. Roles and responsibilities for handling complaints are clearly defined. The CLC is responsible, should the complaint need to be independent of the school, for liaising with the school and representing the complainant's interests, redirecting the complaint, referring the complaint to a senior manager, or identifying an independent investigator. Students are supported by the CLC and staff from Student Services. The review team examined documentation relating to a recent student complaint and found that the complaint in question was handled in line with College policies and in a timely and considerate manner. The student was alerted to how they might take the complaint forward if they so choose.

2.79 The Student Charter includes information about the complaints process and timelines. Complaints statistics feature in course self-evaluation procedures. The review team heard from staff that complaints handled at an informal level are recorded electronically and that staff use this system to share information about student needs.

2.80 Detailed complaint procedures do not feature consistently in student handbooks and some do not note the availability of a formal process. The complaints procedure is available on the College website but not available via the search function. Handbooks inform

students to contact student services or tutors if they wish to make a complaint and handbooks do not inform students that a formal procedure is also publicly available online; this indicates that there is scope to make the complaints procedure more accessible. Students with whom the review team met were unsure about the College's complaints procedure and not confident about where they might find it written. They suggested that they might approach teaching staff at the College or the awarding body. The review team examined the student VLE, including the site that hosts course information and the student intranet, and found that the complaints and appeals procedures were not readily available through either the search function or through the tabs. The team **recommends** that the College makes information about complaints and academic appeal procedures consistently available to students in handbooks and other accessible media by September 2015.

2.81 For students on the University's programmes, responsibility for academic appeals rests with the University. Students are directed to this through a hyperlink in the 2+2 handbook, but information is not included in the handbooks for the Diploma in Education and Training.

2.82 The Higher Education Course Handbook encourages students to approach a tutor for the College's appeals procedure, with little further information provided. The review team searched the VLE for the appeals procedure and found that it was not readily accessible online.

2.83 The College's appeals policy advises students at stage four to write to the external verifier. The review team found this process misaligns with that laid out in the awarding organisation's literature, which advises students to email a specific Pearson address. Further, Pearson guidance does not include handling appeals in the responsibilities of external/standards verifiers. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College formally agrees, and communicates to students, an academic appeals process that aligns with the awarding organisation's appeals policy by May 2015.

2.84 The review team concludes that complaints and appeals procedures at the College are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement. The team heard that students were confident that they would be able to approach staff and find information about the complaints and appeals procedures if they needed them. The team concludes that the Expectation is met. The inaccessibility of the complaints procedure and the risk to the College posed by the mismatch between its academic appeals guidance and that of the awarding organisation indicate that although the procedures are adequate, there are shortcomings in the rigour with which they are applied, and this represents a moderate risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

2.85 The College delivers learning opportunities with partners other than its awarding bodies in two ways. The Diploma in Education and Training works within the framework for teacher training and includes a compulsory 100 hours of classroom experience. Students on Higher National courses are encouraged by the College to include a work placement. Only the Higher National programme in Photography at the College routinely uses work placements, building on experience in supporting work placements on the previous HND in Visual Communication.

2.86 Processes for managing the classroom experience element of the Diploma in Education and Training are set out by the University and articulated to students in the course Student Handbook. Extending knowledge of professional practice is the aim of the module Professional Practice in Art and Design on the HNC Photography. This is a core module but work experience is optional rather than compulsory. The course team encourages students to find placements, and helps them if necessary. Placements only proceed if employers sign formal contracts with the College to accept the student. The student's experience of the placement contributes to the assessment for the module. The review team considers that these arrangements meet the Expectation in principle, and tested them in discussion with staff and students and through scrutiny of student handbooks and paperwork given to employers.

2.87 Within the scheme for the Diploma in Education and Training, all students are allocated a professional mentor, supported by a Mentor Handbook. The team's review of these documents showed them to be clear and comprehensive. A report from the course's Staff-Student Liaison Committee noted that students were well supported in the taught part of the course and thus well prepared for the classroom work.

2.88 The review team evaluated the documentation on which the HNC Photography placements are based, and considers that guidance to the employer is clear as to the aims of the placement. Employers are provided with a certificate to show their support for the scheme and encourage further participation. Both students and employers complete evaluation forms at the end of the placement. Teaching staff confirmed that they help students find placements when they encounter difficulties.

2.89 The scale of the College's higher education provision with others is limited, and in the case of the Diploma in Education and Training the extent of the College's responsibility is relatively low. The College takes further and effective steps to support placement provision for HNC Photography. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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



## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.90 In reaching its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.91 The review team finds that the College has adequate arrangements for the selection and admission of students, and effective approaches to learning and teaching, supported by staff training, observation and appraisals, and the use of student feedback. Students are enabled to achieve through tutorial support, formative feedback and learning support services. The College's approach to student engagement includes surveys and forums which provide opportunities for students to make their opinions heard, and the College is demonstrably responsive. Programme teams respond appropriately to external examiner reports and use them as part of a robust approach to programme monitoring and review. Where the College does provide opportunities for students to take placements, it helps to identify employers, engages with employers through mentor handbooks, and invites feedback from mentors and students.

2.92 The review team identified good practice in the integration of provision, and the smooth transition from the College to the awarding body for the final years of the 2+2 programmes.

2.93 Of the 10 applicable Expectations, the review team judges that nine are met. Of these nine, seven have low associated risk and two have moderate associated risk. Three issues were identified in relation to the approval of programmes, where the team finds the lack of involvement of the HE College Committee risks its effectiveness; the lack of a formally documented procedure risks teachers' understanding of the process and it being applied consistently; and the lack of external involvement presents a risk to the quality of programme proposals. Collectively these issues represent a moderate risk because of the insufficient emphasis given to assuring quality in the College's planning procedures. Two issues were identified in relation to complaints and appeals. One relates to the accessibility of the complaints and appeals procedures, the other to the alignment of the appeals procedure to the awarding organisation's requirements. The complaints and appeals procedures are adequate, but together these issues represent shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied, indicating a moderate risk.

2.94 The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is not met because the evidence demonstrated that the assessment regulations for Higher National programmes do not meet those required by the awarding organisation; that staff have developed their own local approaches to late submissions and referrals; and that the College has not adequately responded to instances where staff have misunderstood the criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes. In addition, the Higher Education College Committee has not fulfilled its functions to oversee external examiner reports. These issues relate to weaknesses in the operation of the College's governance structure and insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring quality, and as such represent a moderate risk.

2.95 In addition, the team makes recommendations relating to encouraging and enabling student representation on committees as set out in their terms of reference, and ensuring that external examiner reports are considered at a senior cross-College level. The review team affirms the steps taken to deliver student representative training.

2.96 In making a judgement on this area, the review team notes the unmet Expectations do not pose a serious risk but that there are moderate risks which, without action, could lead to serious problems. For example, if assessment regulations remain as they are, then staff

may further develop local practices in relation to late submissions, resubmissions and referrals, which could lead to further inequality, variability and unreliable approaches to assessment. The shortcomings indicate that the College is not aware of the significance of certain issues, but previous responses to external reviews suggest it will take action as necessary. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.



### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

#### **Findings**

3.1 The College's approach to ensuring that information aligns with the Expectations is to work in collaboration with its awarding partners and use its internal committee structure to generate and examine information. The College submits all advertising and publicity material related to the University's programmes at the College to the University, in accordance with the partnership agreement. The College and the University share responsibility for the programme and module information available to students, and for information available publicly on the website and in printed prospectuses. For the Higher National programmes, the College and Pearson share responsibility for the programme and module information available to students and for public information on the website. Responsibility for the accuracy of this information rests with the College.

3.2 The College makes information available to students through its website, the intranet, the VLE and in handbooks. The College has recently developed a template for handbooks and has instituted an annual check for accuracy. The College is seeking to make more robust use of the VLE and online systems, and to ensure that information is increasingly accessible through it.

3.3 The review team tested this Expectation in meetings with teaching, senior and support staff and with students. It assessed documentation relating to the use of management data, the minutes of meetings, student handbooks, the VLE, the College website, programme specifications, partnership agreements and the quality cycle.

3.4 The accuracy of information for the public on the website and in printed media is ensured through clear responsibilities and dialogue between the marketing team and teaching and senior staff. Information on the governance and ethos of the College is available online. The website has dedicated course pages which include information on entry criteria. In 2013-14 the College developed a new online platform which required all the Heads of School to give the marketing team a complete set of information relating to the course requirements. Information on the website, programme specifications, and course and work placement handbooks is reviewed every July as part of the Quality Calendar. The review team heard from staff that responsibility for checking the accuracy of externally facing information is delegated to programme teams, although the Head of Business, Professional and Higher Education and each Head of School oversee this checking process.

3.5 The review team heard from students and support staff that the College's VLE is used increasingly to host information for current students. The review team found some variation in how staff use the VLE, but heard from both staff and students that the College aimed to increase its use and set a target of 10 per cent teaching provision through the VLE.

3.6 The team heard from students that they had broadly positive but differing experiences of information on application and entrance to the College. One student had problems contacting the College for information over the phone, while another had received erroneous information about the full/part-time nature of the course. Students are required to

access the College's main complaints procedure to find out how to appeal an admissions decision.

3.7 The review team found that information regarding appeals and complaints procedures is not made readily available to students in the printed materials produced by the College and references did not directly link to the policies, but advised students to approach their tutor. Information about complaints and academic appeals is available on the website, but not accessible via the search function and there are no links to the page from key student documents. Information about complaints and appeals is not available on the VLE. These arrangements pose a risk to the accessibility of information available to students. This contributes to the recommendation in paragraph 2.79 of this report.

3.8 The review team considered the information available to staff with responsibility for assuring quality and standards. It found that teaching staff had limited knowledge of course approval procedures and that there are some localised practices. The lack of information for staff on course approval processes puts the ability of staff to take account of quality and standards in the design, development and approval of programmes at risk. This absence of information on course approval represents a gap in the information available to staff on its quality assurance framework. This contributes to the recommendation in paragraph 2.5.

3.9 On enrolment, students are provided with handbooks that contain information about the College and their course. Module information is provided in module guides that detail learning outcomes, the syllabus, and assessment and examination information. Students confirmed that tutors went through handbooks with them as part of induction and that these handbooks are available on the VLE. The handbooks are based on a template agreed by the Higher Education College Committee, and tutors complete the handbooks with course details. The review team found that the handbooks provided by the College lack detail on assessment procedures such as information about late submissions, resubmissions and referrals. This contributes to the recommendation in paragraph 2.53.

3.10 Based on the evidence provided, the review finds that there is a lack of definitive information available to, and used by, staff on key College processes, course approval and assessment regulations regarding late submissions, resubmissions and referrals. Information on complaints and appeals is not made sufficiently accessible through either handbooks or other media to students. Handbooks lack full information of the full assessment regulations relevant to students' courses. These issues indicate that the College places insufficient emphasis or priority on assuring the quality of information provided to students and staff, and this represents a moderate risk. Taking account of these problems, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met. The review team **recommends** that the College produces information about learning opportunities that is fit for purpose and accessible by September 2015.

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

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12 The review team finds that the College works with its awarding partners to provide information about its programmes through the College website, the VLE, prospectuses, handbooks and other key documents. There are clear responsibilities for, and checks on, the provision of publicly available information about learning opportunities.

3.13 The review team judges that the Expectation is not met because of a number of issues relating to the provision of information to staff and students. The lack of information for staff on course approval processes puts the ability of staff to take account of quality and standards in the design, development and approval of programmes at risk. Students lack information on the full, applicable assessment regulations for Higher National courses. The appeals and complaints process for current students is not made readily available in handbooks, or on the VLE, limiting its accessibility. These issues indicate that the College places insufficient emphasis or priority on assuring the quality of information provided to students and staff, and this represents a moderate risk. The review team makes one recommendation for the College to produce information about learning opportunities that is fit for purpose and accessible.

3.14 In making a judgement on this area, the review team notes that the Expectation is not met and the issues indicate a moderate risk. Without action, these issues could compromise the student experience and the ability of staff to meet their responsibilities for assessment. The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The College's approach to enhancement is set out in its Higher Education Strategy 2014-16. The Strategy has a number of specific objectives, which include clarifying the responsibilities of staff and students in relation to the structures and systems for enhancing higher education. It also aims to enhance the scholarly effectiveness of staff and develop effective external partnerships. The Higher Education Strategy and the e-Learning Strategy 2014-16 reflect the College's intention to embed more technology-based learning.

4.2 Programme teams follow an annual monitoring process by completing self-evaluation documents based on a template. This requires programme teams to reflect on student satisfaction surveys, student data, external examiner reports and grade profiles. The template also requires programme teams to reflect on enhancement within the programme. It is intended that these self-evaluation documents are considered at Course Review Boards throughout the year and at the Higher Education College Committee. The Committee also provides a forum for Heads of School to enhance good practice across Schools.

4.3 The review team considers that these processes meet the Expectation in principle. The team evaluated the College's strategies, self-evaluation documents, quality assurance reporting processes and the use of student feedback. The review team explored this Expectation in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

4.4 The College's strategies provide a framework for steps to be taken at institutional level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The Higher Education Strategy includes an action plan that supports the strategic aims but does not reflect all of the objectives. The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2012-14 is due an update and this enhanced technology focus is to be embedded in the new strategy.

4.5 The process of setting strategy in the College appears effective in areas of teaching and learning as elsewhere. Strategies are accessible and oriented to action. Dates for review are set and kept. Many of the strategies are relatively short term. Some cover a period of three years and subordinate ones are reviewed annually, which may be apt in the rapidly changing educational context, and complement other ongoing changes in the College. The evidence seen by the review team suggests that these strategies are top-down documents as noted in paragraph 2.20: minutes reflect the operational nature of the Higher Education College Committee, indicating it has not yet demonstrated its ability to act strategically.

4.6 The team learned of the College's plans to update the Teaching and Learning Strategy by incorporating more technology-enhanced learning. Students confirmed that they value online resources, and those studying on University programmes particularly valued the resources provided by the University. All higher education programmes have VLE site pages but the volume of curriculum-related content is limited for some programmes. The College has recently introduced a gold, silver, bronze scheme award to encourage and motivate tutors to provide additional content, and is training staff on use of the VLE. The review team **affirms** the steps taken to extend the use of the VLE in learning and teaching.

4.7 Care is taken to ensure that student views are recorded through the annual first impressions and mid-course surveys, and students attend staff-student liaison committees at

both the College and the University. The Quality Improvement Cycle for 2014-15 identifies points in the academic year when student feedback is gathered, and analysed by course teams and the relevant school. A Student Liaison Committee chaired by the Chair of Governors, and attended by key staff, listens directly to student views. Higher education learner forums are convened termly and all cohorts have a class representative to speak at these forums on behalf of learners. The College is responsive to student feedback. For example, it has provided a higher education student Common Room, received positively by students. A newly developed system of module evaluation allows students to feed back on individual modules.

4.8 The course self-evaluation process and its timetable are documented carefully by the College and followed by staff. Programme teams are required to comment and reflect on enhancement and are able to use data to draw further conclusions on the effectiveness of approaches taken. It is evident to the team that programme teams are focused on trying to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The operational nature of the Higher Education College Committee meetings means that certain School-based issues could be raised and addressed. For example, staff training needs could be identified and practical opportunities to improve student learning could be discussed and addressed.

4.9 The College has an observation policy so that all teachers are observed by trained colleagues in the classroom and have resulting actions plans to enhance their teaching. Staff annual appraisals have specific targets linked to improved performance and the College provides a year-round continuous professional development programme for all staff.

4.10 The review team concludes that the steps taken to improve annual monitoring of higher education programmes have resulted in a process that enables reflection on the student learning opportunities that resulted in action and enhancement. Good practice is shared at College level. It is evident that enhancement is driven both by strategy and students, and the College is taking steps to implement its strategies and respond to student feedback. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11 In reaching its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.12 The review team finds the College has a clear vision for the enhancement of its learning opportunities, and has effective procedures for staff to reflect on learning and teaching and identify improvements. The College gathers and uses student feedback from both surveys and forums to enhance provision. The College's quality assurance procedures enable the sharing of good practice across programmes, and a clear oversight of higher education provision.

4.13 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because of the College's robust processes for reviewing and enhancing programmes, and the evident student-driven and strategy-driven enhancements. The review team affirms the steps taken to extend the use of the VLE in learning and teaching.

4.14 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College's website refers to the College as having a 'long and proud history of working with employers', adding also that 'City College Coventry has one of the most successful apprenticeship programmes in the region'. The Higher Education Strategy aligns with an objective to 'develop partnerships with employers that provide meaningful work experience to higher education students'. The College has a number of approaches to this. It provides a training day focused on employability in which teachers evaluate the 'existing position within their areas in addition to having the opportunity to share, propose and develop future enhancements'.

5.2 Employability is evident in curriculum design in ways determined by individual courses rather than in any overall structured way. The University's 2+2 programme has an emphasis on academic success and preparing students for progression to the University-based provision, although one of the pathways, Health and Social Policy, does have quite a strong vocational dimension. The Diploma in Education and Training is directly concerned with employability skills and requires a significant number of training hours.

5.3 The focus on employability in the Higher National programmes is implicit in the vocational nature of the awards. In the HND in Music Production (not recruiting at the time of the review), for example, the external examiner praised the way assignment briefs are 'written to draw students in the vocational context'. Among other Higher National programmes, the HNC Photography has the strongest focus on employability, and includes a Professional Practice core module, for which the College urges students to take a placement. This course builds on a similar structure in the discontinued HNC in Visual Communication. In other courses the link between teaching and employability is more informal. The team heard that in the new HNC Performing Arts course the programme aimed to help students secure auditions to get experience of performing and theatre work. In relation to the HNC Business, the team heard that most students were part-time and in employment.

5.4 In terms of the effectiveness of these employability initiatives, mid-term surveys of Higher Nationals in Photography and Music Production reveal that more than 80 per cent of students consider that the courses enable them to develop skills that will help them gain employment at the end of the course. This question was not included in the mid-term survey for the University courses. Just over a third of the University students at the College reported that they had an individual learning plan setting out targets for the development of skills.

5.5 All students have access to the College's Careers Service and the team heard that its aim is to provide a dedicated higher education focus in their activities. Higher education students are invited to see a careers adviser and the College offers a careers event in spring, inviting employers and talking about graduate jobs. The Service also holds a 'progression month' for students which focuses on transition to the University or employment. The team's meeting with students indicated that they were not aware of this, but this may be attributed to the students present who were either already closely integrated in the University environment and using the Careers Service there, or still new to higher education study.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 27 to 29 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://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](http://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* (FHEQIS).

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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