Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Cliff College

June 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Cliff College from 15-17 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Heather Barrett-Mold
- Dr Simon Jones
- Elizabeth Houghton (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

In reviewing Cliff College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Cliff College

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

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

Recommendations

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

By October 2016:

- strengthen student engagement across all programmes and ensure that all student representatives, both elected and appointed, are trained and supported to perform their role effectively (Expectation B5)
- clarify responsibilities for the signing off of information (Expectation C).

By February 2017:

- develop and implement a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

By March 2017

- ensure that all staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions receive appropriate training (Expectation B2)
- revise the admissions policy to ensure that processes are consistently managed and are transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive (Expectation B2)
- consistently collect and evaluate quantitative student data (Expectations B4 and B3).

Theme: Student Employability

Cliff College has a good awareness of the types of career that its students are likely to engage in and there is an emphasis on developing appropriate employability skills.

Placement opportunities are available at all levels of the full-time BA (Hons) in Theology. Students on the other part time undergraduate and postgraduate courses are already involved in work or volunteer roles in ministry. The programmes enhance reflection of their practice.

Faculty have experience of working in this area and good use is made of leading practitioners as Adjunct Lecturers. The College has strong work relationships with organisations that can offer voluntary service or employment to graduates. The College is developing a Ministry Advisory Group which includes employers and practitioners.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About Cliff College

Cliff College (the College) is an evangelical theological college based constitutionally within the Methodist Church of Great Britain. It is situated in the Peak District in Derbyshire a few miles outside Chesterfield. The College's ethos includes a commitment to the holistic development of students, seeking to help them to become spiritually, ethically and intellectually mature, and with an appreciation of the value of accountability in professional life.

The College provides undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the following areas: BA (Hons) in Theology, BA (Hons) in Mission and Ministry, Higher Education Diploma in Children, Mission and Ministry; Third Age, Mission and Ministry and Creative Arts, Mission and Ministry, MA in Mission; PhD (Post graduate research) and PhD Missiology. There are a total of 198 students of whom 48 are full-time, 145 are part-time and five students who have interrupted their studies. There are 10 academic staff of whom nine are full-time and one is part-time.

Since their last Review for Educational Oversight in 2012 by QAA the College has introduced a new virtual learning environment (VLE) and successfully delivered a new postgraduate online unit. The University of Manchester has approved the development of more online units.

The College have added external partnerships as a regular agenda item at faculty meetings and a new placement policy has been introduced.

All of the College's courses are validated by the University of Manchester. Following a successful Periodic Review and Institutional Review by the University in October 2015 (the quinquennial review), the University has renewed the Collaborative Agreement between itself and the College, effective from 1 January 2016.

Explanation of the findings about Cliff College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about Cliff College

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The College's higher education provision is validated through the University of Manchester (the University) and this awarding body ensures that it meets the requirements of the FHEQ. The partnership agreement makes it clear that College undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are not associate students of the awarding body. Postgraduate Research (PGR) students are members of both the College and the University.

1.2   All programmes validated by the awarding body are defined in programme specifications, following the awarding body's guidance, written to their template and approved by the University's Academic Panel. The awarding body also requires that programme specifications are written to demonstrate alignment with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The expectation that programmes take account of relevant national statements is further facilitated and monitored by the approach of both awarding body and College that requires that the validation event panels include external, independent subject specialists.

1.3   Titling conventions are monitored by the awarding body. Its requirement includes the specification of the level of the final award of the programme and that learning outcomes are appropriate for the level of the award through their alignment with the appropriate level

descriptor of the FHEQ. The attainment of the learning outcomes offers evidence that the award should be made.

1.4   Unit Descriptors indicate how much credit is associated with each unit.
The awarding body requires all programmes to use the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme. It is the responsibility of each Programme Lead with the Academic Dean to ensure compliance with the Subject Benchmark Statement.

1.5   The College adheres to the programme approval and quality assurance processes of its awarding body to ensure that appropriate threshold academic standards are secured for its programmes. The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6   The team examined a range of documentation to test how the College secures threshold academic standards for its provision. Documentation included the collaborative agreement, the 2015 quinquennial review report, programme handbooks, external examiner reports and annual reviews. The team also met the College Principal, senior, teaching and support staff, students, and had a discussion with key awarding body staff.

1.7   Programme development teams demonstrate that UK threshold standards are met through the mapping of programme and module outcomes to the FHEQ, and relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements. The external approval/validation process and external examiner reports confirm academic standards have been met.

1.8   The Academic Dean and Academic Registrar are in regular contact with the Collaborative Academic Advisor (CAA) and Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer (CPAO) from the University, who ensure College compliance with all regulations and frameworks, and facilitate the College's active implementation of all guidance and advice on academic matters. They are also members of the exam boards, thus taking practical responsibility for ensuring that decisions regarding assessment are made in accordance with awarding body regulations and expectations. The CAA visits the College on at least three occasions each year to underline this accountability and to have face-to-face meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.9   The awarding body provides the College with updates on best academic practice and these are cascaded down to staff. The quinquennial review of the College (October 2015) concluded: 'the review panel agree that Cliff College continues to be a suitable partner to provide degrees validated by the Awarding Body of Manchester'.

1.10   The team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The robust systems, policies and processes the College has in place ensure that standards are being met and the associated level of 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

1.11   The validated programmes operate under the awarding body academic regulations with the College adopting its degree regulations. Basic academic regulations are included within programme handbooks provided to students. There are extracts from the regulations at relevant sections of the handbooks, and then direct web links to the awarding body policies and procedures. Some regulations are also featured on the student section of the virtual learning environment (VLE). The College follows the awarding body guidance on the operation of exam boards. The Boards of Examiners include all academic staff teaching on the relevant programme, the external examiners, and the CAA.

1.12   The College's Research Degrees Committee reports to the awarding body, recommending admissions, supervision, changes to supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the research degree provision and the progress of research students. The awarding body has biannual meetings with the Partnership in Research group which includes Cliff College which serve to facilitate communication, compliance with all requirements, and the sharing of good practice.

1.13   Formal Faculty meetings determine the College's academic and educational policies, procedures and structures, responsible to the Cliff College Committee to determine these policies in such a way as to fulfil the stated mission and ethos of the College.

1.14   External examiner reports support the upholding of standards and the process of the academic quality reviews and exam boards. The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.15   The review team has tested the Expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the assurance of academic standards from the awarding body and the College, external examiner reports and discussions with College and awarding body staff and students.

1.16   The awarding body has clear processes for exam boards and awards and the College uses the awarding body assessment regulations and its programme approval and quality assurance processes to ensure that appropriate threshold academic standards are secured for its programmes.

1.17   There are frequent and helpful points of contact between the awarding body and the College through the CAA and CPAO which support rigorous checks. Staff and students demonstrated confidence in the processes and students are aware of the levels they need to attain in assessments and how the process works.

1.18   The team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.19   The College delivers degree programmes on behalf of its awarding body, the University of Manchester. The definitive record of each of the College's validated programmes are its programme specifications, which follow the University's template and are approved by them. Information about programme specifications and assessment are contained within programme handbooks and on the VLE for students to access.

1.20   The Academic Registrar's office maintains the definitive records of all official documentation. This includes copies of student academic transcripts. The Academic Dean and the Academic Registrar maintain archival storage of previous official documentation.

1.21   The College has a dedicated drive, accessible by all relevant staff, for storing records relating to programmes. The drive is populated by discrete folders containing College policies and procedures, University policies and procedures, QAA documents, and external examiner reports.

1.22   The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.23   The review team looked at a range of documentation including a sample of programme handbooks across the full range of provision and the College VLE. Meetings were held with College staff and students.

1.24   The College delivers its provision in partnership with the University and operates in line with their academic regulations, policies and procedures. There are processes in place for the delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of its programmes of study, and the provision of records for programmes delivered on behalf of the University.

1.25   There is evidence of the College managing its responsibilities for the review and monitoring of programmes and the keeping of definitive records for programme specifications for its higher education provision effectively.

1.26   The team concludes that the College meets the Expectation through provision of programme specifications available to staff and students. The management of programme specification for its awards are appropriate, therefore the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27   The processes for the approval and review of validated provision are the responsibility of the awarding body, and are specified in the University's Guidance and Procedures for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision. The College engages with the awarding body in seeking approval for new and also revised programmes, and in the monitoring and review of current programmes.

1.28   Each programme undergoes an annual review, resulting in an action plan. The College also has a mid-year review session, to monitor progress on action points and any matters of concern or successful outcome, which serves to facilitate mutual awareness of the full range of developing provision. The College regard this as an enhancement of their critical self-review processes.

1.29   The College uses the procedures set by its awarding body for the design and approval of assessments, which are supported by the College's own internal approval process at the Boards of Studies for each programme. The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30   The review team tested this expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of programmes from awarding bodies, external examiner reports and discussions with College and University staff.

1.31   The evidence reviewed shows that the College operates effectively within the context of its awarding body with whom it enjoys a close working relationship. The College programmes are approved and the academic level checked through the University of Manchester Validation Review Panel. The College contributes to academic validation by attending development meetings and events to demonstrate capacity to deliver the provision at the appropriate levels and confirm partnership arrangements. The review team, being unable to find evidence of using external discipline experts in developing new curricula, did consider that the use of externality in curriculum design and summative assessment might be strengthened through greater reflection of best practice in similar academic communities.

1.32   Course documentation for university programmes is used to determine the levels of learning outcomes and assessment processes to ensure that students are able to achieve them. College staff work closely with University link tutors on assessment and moderation matters to ensure academic standards through cross-marking events following approval. External examiners reports have identified no issues for concern about the academic standards of students' work.

1.33   The team considers that the College's higher education provision is developed and approved in close accordance with the academic framework of the awarding body. The University ensures that the procedures followed by the College align with their guidelines and regulations. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the 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

1.34   The University has the lead responsibility to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded against relevant learning outcomes demonstrated through assessment, and that both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.

1.35   The College conducts assessments according to clear, appropriate, published criteria and within the awarding body's policies and procedures for assessment. The role of external examiners is particularly significant in ensuring standards of assessment and ensuring that awards are appropriate to the demonstration of learning.

1.36   The assessment portfolios in the College's units of study, including any proposals to amend them, are approved by the Academic Panel, ensuring that they adhere to the appropriate standards and procedures.

1.37   These processes enable the Expectation to be met.

1.38   The review team looked at documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of programmes from awarding bodies, assessment policies and regulations, external examiner reports and held discussions with College and University staff

1.39   In assuring itself that the standards of the FHEQ are met in respect of the intended learning outcomes in the College's validated programmes, the programmes are regularly monitored by the University. The Programme Leads review their programmes, and the constituent units, on an annual basis, in the light of evaluations from students, the external examiners and the teaching staff themselves. The learning outcomes are explicitly considered when individual programme units are approved, and external examiners have the opportunity to scrutinise these on appointment, and as specific programmes are examined.

1.40   The College is further able to ensure that learning outcomes are appropriate through feedback received formally via student representative input at the Board of Studies as well as the students' own unit evaluations. Any proposed amendments would be examined by the Academic Dean, external examiner and the CAA before being submitted to the next meeting of the awarding body's Academic Panel for approval, or otherwise.

1.41   The College has an integrated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy. In addition, the Academic Dean has produced College guidance on designing assessment to support a College initiative to increase the diversity of purposeful assessment modes. There is regular opportunity to review assessment methods through Board of Studies and Annual Review processes, and the Academic Dean devoted one of the faculty INSET days in 2015-16 to the matter of assessment modes and weightings across the College's full provision.

1.42   The College marking policies are derived from, and approved by, the awarding body. The College moderates a selection of assignments from each grading band, according to the University's marking guidance and assessment framework, and ensuring that in total at least 20 per cent of all scripts are moderated. For the PGT programme, scripts are second marked, where the first marker is usually an adjunct marker and the second is an internal member of faculty. The College has a systematic process of moderation for any marks that are disputed. There is a three week deadline for marking.

1.43   Different modes of assessment also have differentiated marking criteria, as appropriate. The marking criteria are printed on the reverse of the header sheets to aid both the markers in giving feedback, and the students in understanding the same. The College requires all markers and moderators to complete marking Header Sheets electronically, and to apply a full commentary to indicate further to students where marks were gained or lost. The College has an ongoing process of training in marking, and a guidance and discussion document circulated to all markers. In 2014, the College conducted an exercise to benchmark marking against the University's approved criteria, and to support one another in converging the application of the criteria.

1.44   The College operates with the awarding body's requirements for Exam Boards and the Mitigating Circumstances Committee. The effectiveness of the Exam Board's role is enhanced by reviewing, on a rolling basis, the average grades on units, comparing them with previous cohorts for the College. The Academic Dean directs the detection and analysis of any trends that present themselves, and will alert Programme Leads to issues that may need to be addressed.

1.45   The College provides ongoing training for staff, with strong inter and intra-college support from experienced colleagues to ensures that module and programme learning outcomes are assessed and aligned to UK threshold academic standards and those of the University.

1.46   Through its policies and practices the College shows clear understanding and responsibility towards ensuring that the achievement of learning outcomes are demonstrated through assessment. Assessments are aligned to learning outcomes and are approved by the internal and external validation panels, external examiners and the awarding body and their reports confirm the effectiveness of the process. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.47   The College, being a validated partner of the University, does not bear the final responsibility for the setting, delivering and maintaining of academic standards of the awards made but focuses on monitoring and review.

1.48   The College identifies that in order to function effectively within the higher education sector it fully complies and cooperates with the awarding body regarding academic standards. Each validated programme is required to submit an Annual Review, which is reviewed and responded to, on behalf of the awarding body, by the CAA.

1.49   The College recognises that review by external examiners is a key part of the way that threshold standards continue to be met.

1.50   Processes for the ongoing monitoring and review of validated provision are the responsibility of the awarding body which undertakes a five-yearly institutional and periodic review, scrutinising the College's compliance with its required academic standards, the quality of the learning experience provided for students, and alignment with UK threshold standards. The most recent quinquennial review took place in October 2015, resulting in a renewed Collaborative Agreement, effective from 1 January 2016.

1.51   The processes in place enable the Expectation to be met.

1.52   The review team considered documentary evidence, particularly the programme level, College level and institutional level annual monitoring reports and meetings with senior and teaching staff, which included university representatives.

1.53   The awarding body receives annual programme reviews which provide an effective check on the quality of the programme. Every new programme specification and unit descriptor is reviewed by a peer college prior to submission to the University's Academic Panel.

1.54   The College follows the awarding body's requirements for annual monitoring. A College-wide action plan is drawn up following the annual monitoring reports and tracked through its committees that are responsible for academic standards and quality of learning opportunities.

1.55   The process works effectively as in the view of the team, the annual monitoring reports are detailed, evaluative and are reviewed by the awarding body to ensure that the standards are met. Action points from the previous year are tracked over the year by the colleges through the Boards of Study. The College is vigilant in monitoring the process. Progress on action points is reported in annual monitoring and review throughout the year ensuring that the loop is closed.

1.56   The documentary evidence supported by information and explanation received in meetings with senior staff (which included University representatives) and teaching staff confirms that the University's requirements for annual monitoring are met, regular reports are

prepared and action points following the reports are tracked by the College. The team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.57   The awarding body includes and appoints independent, external reviewers for validation and periodic review panels in order to maintain the security of threshold academic standards. The College nominates appropriately experienced external examiners for its validated programmes. The awarding body approves, appoints and employs the College's external examiners. External examiner reports are sent directly by them to the awarding body, which forwards them to the College, along with comments on the content of the reports. The external examiners' reports indicate that national standards are consistently maintained by the College. External examiners' are positive and supportive. External examiners are inducted into the College using awarding body and College documentation. This is delivered as and when required.

1.58   The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.59   The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the assurance of academic standards from the awarding body and the College, external examiner reports, and discussions with College and awarding body staff and students.

1.60   All assessed work is made available to the external examiners prior to Exam Boards, and they are able to view all assessed work remotely, at any point during the year. The confirmation or challenge from the external examiners as regards assessment for the units serves to check the validity of assessments in terms of testing the learning outcomes as specified for the programme and the unit.

1.61   In May 2014 a College review of policies and practices relating to external examiners was undertaken, confirming that they were all in alignment with the Quality Code and the requirements of the awarding body. External examiner reports are shared with students through the VLE.

1.62   External examiners' reports are considered as part of annual reviews, and any issues raised, and actions taken to address them, are reported to the Board of Studies. Where appropriate, issues are raised at Faculty meetings where they can be resolved.

1.63   The CAA and CPAO are members of the awarding body and appointed to bear responsibility for central elements of quality assurance relating to the maintenance of academic threshold standards. They are both members of the College's Exam Board and Mitigating Circumstances Committee. The CAA is a member of the Board of Studies and the Research Degrees Committee. The CAA provides an annual report to the awarding body on the running of the College's exam boards, and the administrative processes associated with them and an annual report on the Quality Assurance and Enhancement provision of the College overall.

1.64   A Ministry Advisory Group is being established and will be composed of external practitioners including past graduates, committed to being critical friends of the College. A first meeting is scheduled for 13 July 2016. The goal is to present the College with an external view on various issues relevant to the development of the programmes. Members of the Ministry Advisory Group will be invited once per semester for half a day in order to hold a collegiate meeting for which they will inform the agenda.

1.65   In June 2014, the external examiner for the BA (Hons) in Mission and Ministry programme noted that improvement was needed in making the link between marks and grade more transparent. In June 2015 the same external examiner recorded that there was plenty of evidence that the issue had been addressed. A challenge by the external examiner for the postgraduate taught programme suggested that assessment questions need more clarity. He later commended the improvement.

1.66   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.68   All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low. In all sections under academic standards the College is required to adhere to the procedures of its awarding body. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this section.

1.69   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College has designed its programmes to reflect the specialist provision in the sector, and is recognised nationally and internationally for them. Ensuring programme development meets the academic standards for higher education provision, final approval, validation and revalidation of validated programmes is the responsibility of the awarding body, and is ultimately independent of the College. The processes and criteria for approval are clearly laid out in the University's Collaboration Guidance, with due diligence paid to standards and quality, including the meeting of academic threshold standards.

2.2   The College actively participates in the various levels of scrutiny and support available as a validated College of the University. The processes of design and the institutional approval of submissions to the University are the responsibility of the Academic Dean, working collaboratively with Programme Leads and Faculty staff. Proposed developments and changes are considered at Faculty meetings involving students, members of faculty and the Academic Dean, and with comments from external examiners and the awarding body through its group of validated theological colleges.

2.3   All current programmes and proposed developments are aligned to the Quality Code, and the requirements of the awarding body; the portfolio aligned in 2015. The Academic Dean has also included a review of how the College can develop its curriculum planning proactively in accordance with the University's 2020 Strategic Plan, as part of the 2015-16 INSET programme for faculty.

2.4   The processes in place enable the Expectation to be met.

2.5   New or revised units or programmes are considered at the biannual meeting of the University's Academic Panel to assure the standards of programmes and the quality of the student learning opportunities for approval. This approval is recommended to the University's School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, of which the College is a part, and if approved there, to the University Faculty itself. Only when approval is granted by the Faculty can a programme be run by the College. This approval process also governs proposals for new or redesigned module options centred on mission choices within programmes, and also new or revised units within programmes.

2.6   In addition to the University's criteria for validation, the College ensures that proposals fit with its Mission Statement, are financially sustainable, and are allocated necessary resources. Programme planning discussions and decisions, including resource issues, take place at the Annual and Mid-Year Programme Reviews.

2.7   The team analysed the College's self-evaluation document and associated supporting evidence. It met awarding body representatives, senior, academic and support staff.

2.8   The team heard that University programmes are delivered in a franchise agreement. The College supports validation by producing documents as needed, and College staff attend validation events at the University. The validation requirements are well understood by College staff and they work closely with University link tutors to ensure that validation requirements are met. College staff attend planning meetings with link tutors and staff of other partner Colleges of the university, to discuss best practice in the delivery of programmes. The team recognise the strong relationship maintained by the University and the College.

2.9   The College Academic Board involves Course Leaders in overseeing the changing regulatory environment, ensuring changes to programmes are recognised. The College formally acknowledges changes to validated programmes through their franchise arrangements with the awarding body. All new course validations and course developments are presented to relevant Student Representative Forums or Board of Study for comment and recommendations feed into the development process. The Dean of Higher Education works with course development teams establishing and maintaining academic standards and assuring the quality of annual learning opportunities.

2.10   The College has responded to the student voice to offer an enhanced choice of academic streams at Level 4 and course development teams use feedback from module evaluations and from student representatives to inform curriculum design.

2.11   The College acknowledges that external input is highly influential, and actively seeks out the contribution of external bodies including employers, industry representatives and external stakeholders who contribute from their perspective, advice on the student experience and provide work-based learning opportunities through mission. The close relationship, and interdependence between the College, teaching staff and Ministry providers was evident, and their contribution demonstrated in the programme development process. At meetings employers demonstrated their enthusiasm about the College's approaches to working with them in developing higher education programmes to meet local sector needs.

2.12   The team concludes that the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes that support the setting and maintenance of academic standards and assure the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. Therefore Expectation B1 is met and the associated level of risk is low because of the strengths in the College's academic governance structure and relationship with its university partner.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.13   The College has responsibility for recruitment and admissions for its taught provision, and has its own admissions policy for taught degrees. Postgraduate Research admissions are subject to approval by the University as students hold joint membership of both institutions.

2.14   Taught undergraduate students are able to apply via UCAS or by direct application to the College. The College's own application form is made available on its website and is accompanied by information on the application process.

2.15   The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

2.16   The review team looked at a range of evidence, including policies relating to admissions such as the College's Admissions policy, the University's admissions policies, interview forms, assessed written work, and a selection of completed applications forms. Meetings were held with senior staff and staff involved in the admission processes.

2.17   Standard entry criteria for undergraduate programmes is set at two A Levels. Applicants who do not meet the entry criteria are interviewed and may be required to submit an additional piece of written work to ensure they are able to perform at the required level. Interviews are conducted by Programme Leads and follow a standardised format. Written work is assessed against Level Four marking criteria.

2.18   Programme Leads take responsibility for admissions decisions on their programmes. In the case of 'uncertain applications' the responsibility passes to the Academic Dean. The College rejects a small proportion of applicants. In cases of rejection applicants are informed of the reason and there is an appeals policy.

2.19   Programme admission and retention are monitored as part of the Annual Programme Reviews and updates are included in reports to the Programme Board of Studies. The College has a widening participation agenda and considers Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) when appropriate.

2.20   The application process was discussed during the meeting held with students.

2.21   Postgraduate research admissions are effectively operated in line with the University's policies. The postgraduate research student spoken to reported finding the process straightforward and College staff supportive during their application.

2.22   The review team found that the current practice of the admissions interview for undergraduate applications was inconsistent across programmes, despite the programmes being of a similar nature.

2.23   Programme Leads do not received formalised training in how to make admissions decisions. Staff inexperienced in admissions may shadow more experienced staff, but there is no use of external sector resources or awareness of best practice. There are no

safeguards in place to mitigate against unconscious bias being replicated through this practice. The process is reliant on the personal judgement of the individual Programme Leads and is not underpinned by a systemic approach.

2.24   In order to reduce any potential for unconscious bias and ensure that all applicants are treated consistently the review team **recommends** that the College ensure that all staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions receive appropriate training.

2.25   Information to applicants around the purpose of the interview is opaque, and the review team found students who had gone through the interview process understood its purpose differently to what the Admissions Policy suggested. Students understood it to be an opportunity for them to see whether the College was the right learning environment for them, a view supported by staff. The College Admissions Policy states that non-standard entry students will normally be required to participate in a formal interview and provide satisfactory evidence of their ability to study at a degree level, though it does not outright state that there is a need to pass the interview, although it was confirmed by staff that this is the case. In email correspondence with potential applicants the interview is described as 'informal'. It is not stated that it is necessary to successfully pass the interview to guarantee acceptance onto the programme.

2.26   In cases where applicants are required to submit an additional piece of written work, this is again based on Programme Leads' judgement against the Level Four marking criteria for that programme. There are no checks in place to ensure staff are applying judgements fairly and consistently. Applicants are not informed of the exact criteria they will be measured against. This practice goes against the College's Admissions Policy's 'commitment to fairness'.

2.27   The review team found that there was a planned alteration to the admissions process late into the 2016-17 admissions cycle. The College, on the advice of UCAS, proposed to remove the need for interviews only for those applicants who had already achieved or had predicted grades which met or exceeded the entry criteria.

2.28   The awarding body granted permission for the current 2016-17 application cycle, under condition that the College monitor for impact and report back to the University before additional permission would be granted for the next admissions cycle. However, the College did not advertise this new process on its website. This lack of information presented a potential deviation from a fair and consistent admissions process, as applicants applying for the same cycle would encounter different procedures.

2.29   In light of the different accounts presented by staff and students, the lack of accurate information provided to applicants, and the proposed changes to the admissions process mid-cycle, the review team **recommends** that the College revise the admissions policy to ensure that processes are consistently managed and are transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive.

2.30   On the evidence presented it is apparent that depending on pathway of their application, students may be dealt with inconsistently, and be presented with a number of additional barriers to their successful admission. There is lack of a consistent, transparent and fair process for the admissions interview. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated risk is moderate due to weaknesses in part of the Provider's academic governance structures.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.31   The College has a new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy. This Policy, informed by feedback from students, defines the ethos and principles of teaching and assessment; it is available to all students and staff on the VLE.

2.32   The College is committed to a rolling budget for enhancing the provision of physical resources. The College has increased the space available for teaching and learning over the last five years. This includes expansion of the library in discussion with the student groups. The books, study environment and computer facilities are extensively used. The College is in the process of developing its use of anti-plagiarism software enabling alignment with the awarding body expectations and sector norm. Increasingly assessment requires some form of live oral or correspondence-type presentation into the assessment portfolio which identifies the student and all students submit work using electronic submission methods.

2.33   The College appoints appropriately qualified faculty, all of whom are approved by the awarding body. All faculty are required to hold an educational qualification, within two years of appointment. There is good provision for staff development including an annual in-service programme and the College is committed to supporting research. All faculty take part in an annual process of peer review of their teaching which in turn informs the staff development programme.

2.34   The College has an induction process, tailored to each programme, including a formative, prerequisite unit for the postgraduate taught programme. This unit provides students with initial study skills and key information related to missiology. Study Skills is a required course at Level 4 and is also offered at Level 5. Teaching and advising about academic malpractice is included within the Study Skills course. The learning outcomes of the units for Level 5 and 6 students include intellectual and transferable skills, and, in line with the awarding body developments, the more recent units also include a commitment to attitudes and skills that will enhance their employability in the sector. There are developmental courses provided at the awarding body for the postgraduate research students.

2.35   Students have access to the programme handbooks and unit descriptors on the VLE. Programme Specifications, unit descriptors and learning outcomes are accurate. The induction process is tailored to different courses and levels. The College policy and procedures with regard to academic malpractice, are aligned with those of the awarding body and customised for the College community, are made available to students and staff in the programme handbooks and on the VLE. Students benefit from learning the value of integrating theory and practice in any professional role in society.

2.36   Each student has an individual tutorial on each unit. On the BA (Hons) in Theology programme there are bi-weekly programme meetings and regular tutorial support sessions. Students are invited to meet academic staff for either brief informal tutorial advice or to arrange additional formal tutorial times. The community experience reflects a mentoring relationship, and students are encouraged to discuss not only academic, intellectual and

cultural issues with academic staff, but also issues relating to their career or educational development and future employment or ministry.

2.37   Student feedback is also a major source of evidence about teaching quality. If student evaluations over more than one unit or cohort indicate a teaching weakness, then the respective Programme Lead will review teaching practice with the academic involved, tackling any areas that need improvement. Results are collated for consideration at the Board of Studies.

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

2.39   The review team tested the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the engagement of students in learning by scrutiny of the range of evidence supplied, such as marked work, handbooks and peer review records and meeting staff and students.

2.40   The College responds well to the feedback received from students and has made a number of changes as a result. The peer review of teaching and learning clearly informs the further development of teaching staff. The annual programme of staff development has recently included second marking/moderation, understanding dyslexia and its impact on students, effective practices in the use of new technology in teaching, research and supervision, and the benefits of different assessment modes. The College makes little use of standard management information data to inform its quality assurance and quality improvement of its current programmes or to develop strategy and this is subject to a recommendation in Expectation B4.

2.41   The College has been further developing the information on the VLE so that now it is a comprehensive resource. Access to plagiarism-detection software to check assessments will be available through the next academic year although currently students have a good understanding of referencing through their study skills and work on individual units. The College has a core unit on Research Skills for all Level 4 students, and designated tutorial support is provided for students as they progress through their programmes of study. Inquiry-based learning is increasingly important on the post-graduate taught programme. As part of the study skills work, a 'speed MA in Mission dissertation' project is undertaken at a day conference.

2.42   Full and part-time students do not have the same experience of College but both are well supported and the VLE and access to online resources is essential to this social media is used widely and the College might find it useful to develop guidance on both the use of the VLE and social media.

2.43   The review team concludes that the Learning, teaching and Assessment Policy, the well-defined and developed methods of peer review, staff development and scholarly activity together with student support means that the College meets Expectation B3 and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.44   The College aligns itself fully with the awarding body's 2020 guiding principles and values including the fifth of which is 'to be an accessible organisation, committed to advancing equality and diversity'. The College recognises the importance of 'integration, coherence and internal cooperation' among the different elements of its provision and culture, in order to create the holistic approach necessary for student success.

2.45   The College has a Student Guide, accessible on the VLE, and referenced in the programme handbooks, which acts as a student charter, setting out mutual responsibilities in the community. There are weekly College meetings, attended by the Principal, where students are encouraged to raise issues of concern in the community or to share areas of good practice.

2.46   The College operates a varied pastoral care programme. Non-residential students are integrated with residential students at their residential weeks. The College recruits a number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. A general bursary fund and two specific funds help such students to enter and continue in education. In addition, the College applies on their behalf to external organisations that provide grants, to support their education. In total, more than 50 students have benefited from the various bursary funds in the last three years.

2.47   Postgraduate taught students, who are all part-time, make good use of email enquiries, email tutorials, booked telephone tutorials, video conferencing, and easily arranged face-to-face meetings. There are two residential study weeks at College each year dedicated to the doctoral cohorts. During these weeks, students present updates of their research to the whole research community and receive supervisory tutorials and there are sessions on research methodology with external experts.

2.48   The College recognises the importance of personal and professional development in preparing graduates for public service. These competences include matters of communication ability, self-awareness and self-discipline, group working and self-management.

2.49   A recent quinquennial review by the awarding body in October 2015 concluded that the facilities and learning resources for both staff and students continue to provide a good physical environment for students registered on the programmes at the College.

2.50   The College's commitment to its learning resources is another means by which it supports student development. The library holds some 37,000 volumes. All students have access to this library (as do external readers), and to the support of the librarian and her volunteer staff. All College students also have walk-in access to the awarding body's libraries. The College is committed to replacing staff computers every three years. Wireless computer access is available in all the teaching and learning spaces.

2.51   From January 2015, in response to student feedback, the library changed its access system to enable longer opening hours. The new system allows students to self-issue books when the librarian is not on duty. As a result of a positive response to this development, the library's opening hours have been established permanently as being until 10 pm. There

is an active Library Committee, including a student member, with a comprehensive acquisition policy.

2.52   The policies and procedures adopted by the College allow this Expectation to be met.

2.53   The review team tested student development and achievement through the analysis of the College's strategic approach through responses to its awarding body and annual monitoring and through meetings with staff, students and employers and scrutiny of the evidence provided.

2.54   While the College responds well to student feedback, its use of quantitative data is under developed and as such does not inform College strategy. The team therefore **recommends** that the College consistently collect and evaluate quantitative student data (this recommendation refers to Expectation B3 also).

2.55   The commitment to welcoming individuals with the need for educational support is unaffected by the changes to the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). The College will absorb any additional costs. The College is taking steps to ensure no student with a disability will be disadvantaged by forthcoming changes in funding. In order to support those with learning difficulties the College provides separate rooms for the assessment of students who require the assistance of a scribe, and provide additional time for students, when appropriate. A commonly required provision is that of note-takers during lecture sessions.

2.56   Qualified staff support students with dyslexia and other learning needs. The Academic Dean is responsible for the oversight of this provision, ensuring that the College provides what is required for each student, in accordance with their DSA Statement.

2.57   Employment skills are central to the curriculum for example in the BA (Hons) in Theology programme, the placement units allow students to experience a range of work areas to help them to discern their further direction, while also exposing them to the disciplines involved in a professional, working environment. On the postgraduate taught programme the students are already engaged in professional employment and ministry.

2.58   The Principal acts on any concerns raised by students, reporting back to the students on progress. There are programme meetings every other week where Programme Leads meet students for an opportunity to discuss programme specific concerns. The community ethos of the College is such that students are made aware from the start that they can approach any tutor with any matter of concern, and that such concerns will be dealt with as promptly as possible. An example of a development that arose from a matter being raised by students through an Annual Review, and which has brought huge benefit to students and staff alike, is the College's subscription to EBSCO, a licensed online resource for academic libraries.

2.59   The review team concludes that the College's approach to the support for students in their professional development enables Expectation B4 to be met but that the associated level of risk is moderate due to weaknesses in part of the College's academic governance structures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.60   The College engages with students, both as individuals, as part of course groups and as an active community. It does this through formal mechanisms, including student course representatives, qualitative module evaluations and weekly meetings with the campus-based students, as well as informal conversations with students as individuals.

2.61   Academic course representatives are appointed for each programme and year. These representatives attend department meetings to voice students' concerns and comments. The College does not have a students' union: the social and welfare concerns of the student body are represented by the Student Leadership Team, who are elected by campus-based students.

2.62   The College collects the student voice through end of module evaluations, and rolling informal feedback from students to tutors. The College displays openness to student input at iterative stages of programme design.

2.63   The practices in place enable the Expectation to be met.

2.64   The review team considered a range of documents, including the Student Guide, programme annual reviews, minutes from various programme and Faculty meetings, and the University of Manchester's Periodic and Institutional Review of the link with Cliff College. Meetings were held with senior, support and academic staff, students and employers. The team also looked for evidence of training and support provided to student representatives, along with other sources to identify evidence of the student voice.

2.65   The College's main communication channel with its students is the weekly meeting with campus-based students. It is compulsory for campus-based students to attend this meeting. The meeting is not minuted, so the review team were unable to see firm evidence of what students raise with the College, and how the College then acts on the student voice. Students whom the review team met did not identify these meetings as one of their channels for providing feedback on their student experience.

2.66   There are also bi-weekly 'programme meetings', where Programme Leads meet students to discuss programme-specific concerns. The College is proud of its open-door policy, which allows students to informally give feedback to Faculty on a rolling basis.

2.67   Students give anonymous feedback on each unit via a feedback form. This data is collected and processed by the academic administration team, independently of the Programme Lead.

2.68   The College is taking steps to improve the amount of data it collects for the student voice. Exit interviews have been introduced, and the College uses headline data collected by the National Student Survey (NSS) and also the Graduate Employment Survey (GES). Data from these sources is used by staff during annual programme monitoring reviews, but does not form part of an enhancement strategy, and the review team could not find evidence that it was made available to student representatives. The team was unable to meet student academic representatives, and members of the Student Leadership Team were unclear as to whether they received such data.

2.69   The Principal meets weekly with the Student Leadership Team Liaison Committee to discuss any matters relating to the student experience and student engagement in all aspects of the life of the College. The review team also discusses students' academic concerns with the Programme Lead, or Academic Dean, if matters arise.

2.70   In the meeting held with students it was confirmed that the Student Leadership Team was responsible for representing all students to the College management, but the roles of the team, including the Student President, are only elected by full-time, campus-based students. The Student Leadership Team has no written remit or governance documents. Their training is one induction meeting with the College Principal.

2.71   In the Student Guide and College Website it is stated that the Student Leadership Team represents all students at the College. However, is only elected by students on the BA Theology programme. This excludes part-time undergraduates, and all postgraduate students from electing the Leadership Team, and as such raises concerns about the accountability and representative nature of the Team, concerns which were raised by the University during its Period Quality Review of College provision. It was also noted that no students reported having seen the finished student submission, written by the Lead Student Representative who is also the Student President, again raising concerns about how effective the Student Leadership Team is in representing the student voice to the College.

2.72   The team was not able to speak to an elected academic representative, and so was not able to test how effectively they felt they were able to perform in the role. The team could find no evidence that student academic representatives received any training for their role. It was not made clear how the Student Leadership Team works with academic representatives. Most of the students whom the review team met did not identify the Student Leadership Team as a channel they would use to raise feedback with the College, and instead suggested they were more likely to raise issues on an individual basis.

2.73   In light of the lack of sufficient support materials or training, the review team **recommends** that the College strengthen student engagement across all programmes and ensure that all student representatives, both elected and appointed, are trained and supported to perform their role effectively.

2.74   In the meeting with students the review team was given examples of issues being raised by students through informal conversations, and action being taken by the College to address these concerns. A particular example was the improvement of internet provision, and the expansion of the common room.

2.75   However, it is noted that the facilitation of this engagement largely resulted from the size of the College, which allows a close, informal relationship between staff and students. Students are not partners in their learning under the current set up: this is in line with the findings for Enhancement, which demonstrated a lack of a strategic approach to developing student learning opportunities, as well as a lack of effective support for student representatives underpinned by a lack for formalised governance or a planned training programme.

2.76   The review team was able to see examples of change arising from student feedback and evidence of engagement with the student voice at the College and therefore concluded that Expectation B5 is met. The associated level of risk is moderate as the Student Leadership Team is not representative of all programmes and students, and there is a lack of sufficient guidance, support and training offered to student representatives, which prevents the ability of students to act as partners in their learning.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.77   The awarding body takes ultimate responsibility for awards and the maintenance of national standards, the College cooperates with the it in various ways to ensure that assessment is appropriate. The University's Assessment Framework was updated in February 2016, and the College aligned to this framework through its Faculty's delivery of academic content and student experience, led by the Academic Dean.

2.78   The College has initiated a new practice for consideration by the Exam Board of Statistics that relate directly to student grades, from June 2016. In this new practice, the Exam Board will consider the average grades of cohorts on programmes, comparing these with previous cohorts and their average grades, which will enable monitoring of significant differences from previous years, and whether trends may be emerging.

2.79   The College operates with the awarding body's policy on the submission of work for summative assessment on taught programmes, and the Academic Dean ensured that Programme Leads and students were aware of the revised policy that came into effect in September 2015.

2.80   There are generic assessment criteria for Levels 4-6 and for postgraduate studies which are approved by the University for higher education levels, and the College complies with these.

2.81   These processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.82   The review team tested this expectation through scrutiny of the Assessment Policy and other documents related to setting assessments, training and support of staff, relation with and responsibilities towards the University, external examiner reports and discussions with senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.83   A variety of summative assessment methods are in use across the programmes, all approved by the University. Each Unit Descriptor clearly details the assessment required, and they are reviewed annually. The review team heard of the standardised formula for assessment in the awarding body's model, which was heavily dependent on essay-based mediums. The College has sought to develop alternative methods of assessment including press interviews and newspaper articles in response to student feedback. The team also heard that PGT students are invited to write their own summative assessment titles (though following an essay medium) which is recognised as an empowering approach that was welcomed by the students. However, the diversity of assessment is somewhat limited.

2.84   The College's approach to assessment is summarised in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy. The College is committed to seeing assessment as an integral part of the overarching learning experience, not as an isolated aspect of a student's academic journey. Specific aspects of assessment highlighted in the policy are that it is 'a key driver in improving learning', and that it is designed 'to facilitate progress to further study or professional development'.

2.85   Current assessment methods include: standard set essay questions; PGT students to write their own questions (subject to approval by the Programme Lead); online exercise in which students, working in small groups, plan an online ministry, using the internet or social media; critical analysis of the worldview presupposed by, and expressed in a popular song, television programme or film; an email exchange with an atheist friend (played by the tutor) of at least three emails; and a narrative. These are then presented to an audience of people in a particular cultural or subcultural group.

2.86   In November 2015, the College's Feedback Policy was reviewed to ensure ensuring its alignment with national standards, and providing further guidance on good practice. Led by the Academic Dean, it was approved by faculty and posted on the VLE.

2.87   Undergraduate programmes include formative assessment, which is scheduled to take place in time for feedback to be given to students before the submission date for the summative assessment. Postgraduate students on their first intensive teaching block are able to provide a pre-submission of their assignment, and they will receive extensive feedback to help them, where necessary, to meet the requirements of Level 7 study and achievement.

2.88   The processes of marking, moderating and giving feedback to students, and the College's commitment to transparency and fairness, all align with those of the awarding body, and are explained during the induction week. Criteria are available in the programme handbooks and on the VLE.

2.89   Ensuring the necessary teaching qualifications for staff, mentoring and support by senior academic staff for new teaching colleagues and a systematic approach to setting assignments, marking and second marking/moderation was noted by the team. The review team also noted the strong support for all necessary continuing professional development (CPD) and investment in teaching staff to support the delivery of a good student experience.

2.90   The College's actions in making relevant information available to staff and students in handbooks, on the VLE and through training sessions ensures that the process works effectively in practice. The team heard from students that information was readily available, consistent and never misinterpreted by tutoring staff; the Handbook acted as the definitive resource supported by web-based pages of regulation and policy. Information on assessments, including deadlines and marking criteria are available on VLE and handbooks, and is also explained to students by tutors.

2.91   Assessment guidelines state that assignments must be returned to students within 15 working days. Normally this deadline is met in all programmes, although the process can be delayed by further moderation and other disruptions in the academic calendar, which were clearly flagged and considered highly unusual. External examiners approve and sign off assessments. Changes to assessment go to the external examiner and the Faculty Board.

2.92   Students are aware of the need to demonstrate academic integrity and avoid plagiarism and have received information about plagiarism through documents, academic writing guides and classes. Staff report the incoming adoption of academic malpractice software and the discussion about how its use is to be rolled out in the College, to enhance the student experience, in the coming academic year. Students found feedback on their assignments constructive and formative.

2.93   The review team were informed of the importance given to the standardisation of marking operated by the College. New staff marking is entirely double marked by more experienced colleagues, and the quality of the feedback offered is reviewed. Only when a member of teaching staff is informally considered to be a consistent marker is a more usual

moderation to marking approach taken, in line with the awarding body's need for proportional selection of scripts. Teaching staff considered this approach as very supportive to their development.

2.94   In conclusion the College scrupulously follows the awarding body regulations for the assessment of students. The College operates within clear policies and procedures, which follow the awarding body requirements. Its meticulous use of external examiners, and its staff support and training as evidenced through documentations and meetings mean that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.95   The awarding body is responsible for the appointment, employment and management of external examiners for the College's validated provision. The College operates in accordance with the awarding body's procedures. At Exam Boards, the awarding body expects external examiners to make comments on assessment tasks and students' assignments, and also to confirm both the propriety of the meeting and the specific grades awarded. The CAA for the College confirms compliance with awarding body standards and procedures. The University appointed CAA and CPAO are members of the Exam Board, ensuring compliance with requirements and expectations. The CAA also writes an annual report on the administration and decisions of the Exam Boards.

2.96   The College's policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met.

2.97   The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising external examiner reports and meeting staff and students.

2.98   External examiners are viewed by the College as critical friends. All assessed work is made available to them, electronically, prior to the boards. External examiners give feedback on assessment at Boards of Examiners, and their annual report is submitted directly to the awarding body. Each report is discussed by the relevant programme team and then incorporated in the programme's annual review. This report is submitted to the awarding body for approval. Over the last five years, external examiners' reports have been positive and supportive. External examiners are expected, and encouraged, to comment on curriculum development. External examiners review assessment for the units to ensure that the assessments that are set are valid and designed around the learning outcomes for the unit.

2.99   The awarding body provides guidance on the sharing of external examiner reports with students, including contextualising comments, which the College complies with.

2.100   External examiner reports are made available to students on the VLE although many of the students are not aware of the role of external examiners and have not read an external examiner report. The College has occasionally been challenged to make improvements and has responded well. For example, in June 2014, the external examiner for the postgraduate taught programme suggested reviewing the wording of topics/questions set or agreed with students, the College carried out this action. Subsequently the external examiner commended the improvement.

2.101   The review team concludes that, in view of the close links with external examiners and the awarding body, the College meets Expectation B7 and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.102   The awarding body is responsible for reviewing the College's programmes on an annual basis; the College has always met the requirements and expectations. The College's programme annual reviews focus on structures and functions that apply to the particular programmes. The University-appointed CAA and CPAO are involved in the process of monitoring and reviewing all developments in the College's provision of programmes of study, and receive and review annual review reports, employing the University's template. The College's annual monitoring and review makes constructive comments, and there has not been any cause for concern raised by the University.

2.103   The University conducted a quinquennial review in 2015, comprising an institutional as well as a programme review, and a review of the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes, academic standards and provision of learning opportunities for students. Approval for further collaboration between 2016 and 2020 was agreed.

2.104   The processes in place enable the Expectation to be met.

2.105   This Expectation was tested through scrutiny of the Assessment Policy and other documents related to setting assessments, training and support of staff, relation with and responsibilities towards the University, external examiner reports and discussions with senior, teaching staff and students.

2.106   The College states that it is committed to enhancing the value of how data is collected and managed for information. The College has set up an annual analysis by the June Exam Board of cross-programme statistics, enabling the identification of information that may be of significance in developing its programmes and learning opportunities.

2.107   In order to enhance the value of the annual reviews, in particular with regard to discerning ways to improve the student experience, the Academic Dean instituted the practice of having a joint mid-year meeting of all the Programme Leads, sharing updates on programme development and student feedback, facilitating awareness of good practice by Programme Leads from across all the taught programmes. The first such meeting took place in January 2016.

2.108   The College's annual monitoring reports completely fulfil the requirements of the awarding body; the review team also heard the usefulness of the mid-term appraisal, led by the Academic Dean, in contributing to effective implementation of planning for the student experience. As a future subscriber to the NSS, the College has been investigating the additional range of statistics that the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) requires and reports that it is concerned to achieve the necessary standards given that its planning cycle is reliant on statistics delivered in a different way. However, the review team is confident that while the HESA return may present a challenge, the awarding body's returns are sufficient to fulfil their requirements and enable the College to exercise sufficient action planning and monitoring of these plans.

2.109   Based on the information of the awarding body's satisfaction with annual review and in the periodic review process, the strategic planning the College is undertaking to improve

its capture and reporting of data, and the mid-term meetings with staff the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.110   The College operates its own complaints policy, and process for academic appeals. The College uses the academic regulations of its awarding body. The regulations and policies are made available to students via student handbooks and are also available through the VLE.

2.111   Due to the small nature of the College, most complaints are directed to staff on an informal basis: this facilitates speedy resolution. From 2015-16 the final Faculty Meeting of the academic year reviews all complaints, both formal and informal, enabling the College to identify any areas of risk, and to plan proactively to take measures to mitigate any potential risk.

2.112   The College also has a Dignity Policy, available to students on the VLE. This Policy deals with the issues of harassment and bullying. The Dignity Policy ensures that any student raising a concern under this policy will not be victimised or disadvantaged. The College subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.113   The College has procedures and policies in place that allow the Expectation to be met.

2.114   The review team looked at a range of documents including the Student Complaints Policy, the academic appeals procedure, examples of complaints, the complaints and appeals policy for the awarding university, and programme handbooks. Meetings were held with staff and students.

2.115   The College takes steps to ensure that students receive clear information about their complaints and appeals process and information is provided to students through a variety of methods including the induction process, information published on the VLE and website, and in programme handbooks.

2.116   In meetings students confirmed that they receive advice and information about the complaints process and know how to access it if needed. Students also demonstrated an awareness of their right to appeal within the College processes, and were aware of the University's procedures. The review team noted a disparity between the experiences of students met during the course of the review, and the student submission. Upon investigation the review team could not find evidence to support the concerns stated in this submission: students were aware of where they would find information on complaints and appeals and this information is prominent in the VLE and programme handbooks.

2.117   To date, no formal appeals have been made by higher education students and no formal complaints to the University have been upheld. There is currently no formal process for including complaints into College-wide quality assurance processes but the Academic Registrar assured the review team that were such a complaint to arise it would be given full consideration with annual monitoring and review.

2.118   The review team is satisfied that the College makes information about complaints and appeals procedures available. The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.119   The validated programmes operate under the awarding body academic regulations. The College adopts its degree regulations, and these are the key reference points for all College validated awards. Basic academic regulations are included within Programme Handbooks as part of the essential information provided to students. There are extracts from the regulations at pertinent sections of the handbooks, and then direct web links to the awarding body policies and procedures. The awarding body monitors the College through annual and quinquennial review as well as through the support of the CAA and CPAO and regular communications.

2.120   The College does not franchise provision in any way. The College is not formally approved by any professional bodies. It does not have any formal partners involved in the management of any programmes. The mutually supportive relationship with other partner Colleges of the awarding body operates to share good practice.

2.121   The College's policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met.

2.122   The review team tested the Expectation by scrutiny of evidence provided, such as the collaborative agreement and the way that it functions through the use of external examiners and annual monitoring and meetings with staff, students, employers and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

2.123   There is a requirement that the College arrange the delivery and support of learning by third parties for example within work placements and to ensure that the arrangements are implemented securely and managed effectively. The College has a placement learning component in the undergraduate programme. All placement units have assessment requirements that include a significant level of reflection on practice. Each placement has a supervisor, approved by the College, and who have their responsibilities confirmed to them. There are well established practices for working with employers, and students have tutors who support learning in the workplace. Regular communication between the College and employers to discuss student progress is undertaken. There are effective processes in place to ensure students are properly assessed during placement learning.

2.124   Undergraduate courses include an assessed Mission Placement Unit. Students are provided with a 'placement pack'. Students are effectively supervised during the placement. There are templates for supervisors to comment on students' progress, and supervisors are required to also read, and agree to, the placement handbook. Students have the opportunity to see supervisor report and question it should that be needed.

2.125   The review team concludes that the significant interaction with employers and the importance of Mission means that Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.126   The College offers two doctoral programmes: a professional doctorate, the PhD Missiology, and a standard PhD programme: both are validated by the awarding body. Postgraduate Research (PGR) students hold joint membership of the College and University, and so have full access to University facilities.

2.127   The College has the authority to recommend the admission of students, to approve programmes of postgraduate study, supervisory arrangements, and examination arrangements for research students, and to nominate external examiners: all subject to approval by the University. The College's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) meets twice a year and reports to the University, recommending admissions, supervision, changes to supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the research degree provision and the progress of research students.

2.128   These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.129   The team reviewed regulations, programme handbooks, information on relevant committees, and online resources including the VLE. The team also spoke to senior staff with responsibility for PGR students, academic staff who act as supervisors, and one research student.

2.130   The majority of research students are based off campus. To facilitate their studies the College requires that monthly supervision meetings are held via an interactive video link for all PGR students who are unable to attend in person. The College also hosts two residential study weeks each year for all doctoral students. During these weeks, students present updates of their research, receive supervision tutorials in person, and attend sessions on methodologies and methods of research. Details of the progression process for PGR students are set out in programme handbooks.

2.131   Research students have full borrowing rights at both the College and the University libraries. They also have access to research tools for online journals and other resources through the University. Both general and personalised training in research skills are available at the College for research students.

2.132   Each research student has at least two supervisors. Supervisors are approved by the University and are appointed according to the criteria of the University's Supervision Policy for Research Degrees. The RDC ensures that all supervisory teams have at least one member who has experience of successful research supervision. The responsibilities of the main and co-supervisors are set out clearly in the programme handbooks. Supervisors all hold PhD degrees and are able to attend training provided by the University.

2.133   Minutes of relevant committees show appropriate exercise of oversight at College and University level. The Research Student Handbook is clearly written and accessible.

2.134   The research student told the team that they felt they had been well supported from initial inquiry onwards, that feedback on their work was rapid and constructive, that they understood the terms of their progression, and were aware and made us of both the College's and University's facilities. They also commended the transformative nature of the College's PhD programme.

2.135   The University provides training for staff on supervision, and College staff actively engage with the CPD opportunities this training provides. Postgraduate research students operate under the University's appeals and complaints procedures.

2.136   The review team is satisfied that the College has adequate provision for its postgraduate research students, and is well supported by the University in this regard. The review team concludes that Expectation B11 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.138   All of the Expectations relating to the College's quality of student learning opportunities are met with low risk apart from Expectation B2 which is not met with moderate risk and B4 and B5 which are met with moderate risk. The review team makes four recommendations in this section that concern: revising the admissions policy to ensure that processes are consistently managed and are transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive; ensuring that all staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions receive appropriate training; consistently collecting and evaluating quantitative student data and strengthening student engagement across all programmes and ensuring that all student representatives, both elected and appointed, are trained and supported to perform their role effectively.

2.139   There are no features of good practice or affirmations identified in this section.

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

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The College publishes public information for its higher education provision on its website. The University checks this information for accuracy. The Principal and Programme Leads are responsible for the publication of online information. The College produces an undergraduate prospectus, postgraduate taught study guide, and postgraduate research study guide annually: these are available upon request in both hard copy and PDF format. Fee information is available on the College website, and includes additional costs. Information on assessment, module information, entry requirements and progression options is publically available on the website. No codes of practices for managing the tone and brand of the College's public information exist.

3.2   Students can access information through a variety of media including the website, prospectus, programme handbooks, and the VLE. The University checks programme information for accuracy.

3.3   New students are provided with the Student Guide, which includes information on registration, and is sent to all students shortly before they start their studies at the College. The Student Guide acts as a student charter that outlines the College and students' mutual responsibilities to each other.

3.4   The College's IT & AV Systems Administrator supports the technical side of the VLE. The System Administrator and Academic Dean carry out spot checks of different VLE spaces to ensure they are properly populated.

3.5   External examiners' reports are published for all taught programmes on the VLE and can be accessed by staff and students. The College is responsible for producing degree transcripts for courses it accredits.

3.6   The information provided by the College, and the processes it has in place, make the College's information fit for purpose, accessible and reliable, allowing the Expectation to be met.

3.7   The review team reviewed a number of sources of information, including the College website and VLE, printed material, course handbooks, examples of information, advice and guidance provided to applicants and students, and a demonstration of the VLE. Meetings were held with staff and students.

3.8   Students were aware of where to access information about their courses or College services.

3.9   The College does not currently have written policies in place for the review of website information, social media use, or VLE best practice. The team found a lack of executive oversight for public information, and that sign off processes are unclear and inconsistent.

3.10   In meetings held with College staff it was confirmed that the accuracy of programme information is checked by the University prior to publication. However, the review team uncovered discrepancies between the admission procedure the College was operating and the information provided on its website. This was evidence of a lack of clear process and monitoring of aspects of the College's public information, operating outside of the jurisdiction of the University.

3.11   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College clarify responsibilities for the signing off of information.

3.12   There are currently no formalised, effective methods in place for the capturing, monitoring and dissemination of student data, but methods are being implemented in line with new national requirements.

3.13   The review team concludes that the College makes available a wide range of information in both print and digital formats. Students have confidence in the accuracy and availability of information. The checks put in place by the University mitigate potential risks around the accuracy of programme information, but the College lacks its own structures for the signing off of information. The Expectation is met, but the associated level of risk is moderate due to the lack of executive sign off for public information

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.15 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. There is one recommendation in this section relating to clarifying responsibilities for the signing off of information.

3.16 3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The College constantly seeks to develop the quality of provision intentionally and strategically, and expects and encourages improvements, focused through the Cliff College Committee, Faculty Meeting and College Leadership Group, going beyond the many examples of good practice already evident in the College. Opportunities for enhancement is a standing item on the Faculty Meeting agenda.

4.2   The College takes steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities through identified strategic elements including: extending student choice, innovation in assessment, and effective action planning.

4.3   Extending student choice while maintaining a coherent programme of study, is a basic objective for the College. This is achieved through a wide choice of units and choices that define study pathways. The Academic Panel of the University approved the expansion of choices in the 2016-17 academic year. The College is also responsive to student recommendations for new units. In the 2014-15 academic year, Level 5 students requested more 'theology' at Level 6, in addition to more Hebrew and Greek. Both requests have been accommodated in the development of new modules to meet this need.

4.4   The College is fully aligned with the awarding body's 2020 focus on 'educational innovation' expressed, in part, in the commitment to review modes of assessment within programmes and units in an endeavour to ensure that they remain fit for purpose in the professional contexts to which students are aiming. The Academic Dean made innovation in assessment a focus of the next two years of curriculum development, as seen in the INSET programme for 2015-16.

4.5   A number of innovations have addressed assessment of students, and recognition of prior learning. In a recent development, new modules have focused on providing students a choice of assessment mode within a unit; approved by the partner university's Academic Panel. Thus, students can choose which method will offer them the best opportunity to demonstrate their learning and their application of that learning.

4.6   This strategic position directed by the College's stated mission informs their ongoing process of training in marking. A guidance and discussion document was produced and circulated to all markers (both internal and external). In 2014, the College conducted a 'marking exercise', in which Faculty staff marked two Level 5 3,000 word essays from the same cohort to benchmark College marking against the University approved criteria, and to support one another in converging the application of the criteria.

4.7   Finally, the College is currently working with an action plan for 2015-18 which will be subsumed under the new action plan that arises out of this Higher Education Review (Alternative Provider). Each programme undergoes an annual review, resulting in an action plan. Owing to the importance of the annual review process, the College instituted a mid-year review session, as a genuine enhancement of their critical self-review processes, where the programme leads meet to discuss progress on any action points and any matters of concern or successful outcome.

4.8   The processes in place enable the Expectation to be met.

4.9   This Expectation was tested through the review team's visit, via scrutiny of the documentary evidence, and supported by meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, associated stakeholders, and students.

4.10   The team saw evidence of enhancement through the College's commitment to staff training to complete PG Certificates where required, that will increase an understanding and skills level for the benefit of students.

4.11   Similarly, the review team heard of the diversity of mission that is work-based learning, which is a principle driver in enhancement. Mission is located in every academic level, with an emphasis on practitioner skills in all areas of learning and staff teaching, drawing on their experience support the student experience by requiring them to be active practitioners. The College identifies this as an enhancing element of the learning environment.

4.12   The review team felt that given the diversity of mission experience, and the variability of both placement and the level at which it is delivered, the lack of consistency in strategic design means that the transformative nature of the student experience is not deliberate and strategic. Similarly, a deliberative approach to improving the learner experience through action planning reliant on statistical analysis, student voice and external stakeholder feedback could not be discerned.

4.13   In meetings the College was unable to describe its preparation for the awarding body's 2020 focus on educational innovation and how it might be expected to influence forthcoming curriculum development. The review team was advised of student contribution to the summative assessment diet, and the demand for additional curriculum pathways from which to choose. However, it was noted that examples of assessment enhancement were minimal (for instance the change in medium of an assessment) and modules offered at Level 4 with no explicit pathway through subsequent levels were of minimal impact in the overall student experience. It is not felt that staff are particularly systematically and methodically incorporating the student voice in active curriculum and assessment design as outlined in the Quality Code parts B5 and B6.

4.14   The College does not have an enhancement plan and in meetings was not able to articulate how it takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of the student learning experience. For example, the College identified how heavily reliant the summative assessment diet is on essays, but gave no reflection on the potential impact on students with specific and/or additional learning needs, the necessary planning to support them, or the potential for a diminished achievement. Consequently, the claim for innovation in assessment and effective action planning was not evidenced. Enhancement incorporated into current action plans does not carry SMART outcomes, systemically to address the opportunities in learning environments, assessment diversity, work-based learning (that is mission placement), employability and independent learning captured in the QAA definition of 'Enhancement' in any meaningful way. The review team concludes that the term is poorly understood and integrated into the planning and implementation of academic experience. Consequently, the awarding body's 2020 Educational Innovation initiative will represent an excellent opportunity to develop and implement a strategic understanding of, and approach to, the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.15   The review team could not identify a strongly strategic approach to enhancement of student learning opportunities, or their integration of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at provider level. The conclusion drawn was that the College has yet to develop a real understanding of the breadth of enhancement potential expressed by the QAA, and thus there is lacking any ethos which expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities, overseen by planning oversight and deliberative action

planning. The team **recommends** that the College develop and implement a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning.

4.16   The team were able to identify the support and dissemination of good practice, for example, adjusting the summative assessment based on student feedback but only in limited cases that did not extend horizontally across any academic level, or vertically throughout the student experience. The examples were therefore rather ad hoc and relative to one another rather than forming part of a strategy. The use of quality assurance procedures to identify opportunities for enhancement, were limited in their use in reporting to the awarding body, and extended data analysis, such as HESA returns, were challenging for the College.

4.17   In conclusion, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate due to weaknesses in part of the College's academic governance structure.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.19   The Expectation for this judgement area is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate. There is one recommendation in this section concerning the development and implementation of a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.20   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement** to meet UK expectations.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College is very aware of the types of careers its students are likely to engage in and there is emphasis on developing skills that are beneficial to these sectors. Employability is one of the mandatory aspects of the learning outcomes for every taught unit for programmes validated by the awarding body, expressed in the Unit Descriptor Template, and the College is committed to this development. The College's programmes, particularly the undergraduate programmes, have a significant element of personal development integrated into them. This is expressed in the learning outcomes focused on transferable skills and on employability, and implemented in units such as the Personal and Professional Development unit. A number of summative, as well as formative, assessments help students to appreciate the value of reflection.

5.2   There are placement opportunities at all three levels of the full-time BA (Hons) in Theology. Students on the BA (Hons) in Mission and Ministry programme and the postgraduate taught programme are all part-time, and are already involved in work or volunteer roles in ministry; for them, the programmes enhance their reflection. There are good mechanisms for students to reflect on their development during these placements, and to receive feedback from placement supervisors. The assessed student work evidences a high degree of engagement with practice. Different assessment modes have been developed to aid students in putting their theoretical knowledge into practice such as a radio interview for Missionary Studies.

5.3   The College makes good use of leading practitioners as Adjunct Lecturers in its teaching programmes. Adjunct Lecturers are current practitioners who engage in some teaching. Similarly all Faculty staff have experience of working in this area and in fact are all still engaged in working outside of the College in some capacity but related to their teaching. As such teaching can include important links between theory and practice and Faculty staff are better informed to provide careers advice.

5.4   Employment opportunities are forwarded to current students and recent graduates via emails and through the VLE. Probably more significant are the relationships which the College has with organisations that may provide voluntary service or employment for graduates. Students meet those involved with these organisations when events are held at the College, and this serves to enhance the broadening of their interests, their awareness of different approaches to ministry, and their reflection on possible future employment. The College has established the Ministry Advisory Group, which will include employers/practitioners and will have an advisory/critical-friend role for the College.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 22-25 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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