



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of David Game College Ltd

November 2016

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## 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 David Game College Ltd. The review took place from 22 to 24 November 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Steve Evans
- Ms Andrea McMahon
- Mr Matthew Kearns (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by David Game 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)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

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

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

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.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>2</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about David Game College Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at David Game College Ltd.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at David Game College Ltd.

- The multi-layered and individualised systems of support that enable students to become independent learners and develop their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking (Expectations B3 and B4).
- The comprehensive and consistent use of Individual Learning Plans, which are embedded across the provision and enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectations B3 and B4).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to David Game College Ltd.

By April 2017:

- fully develop work experience policies and procedures to ensure work placements are implemented securely and managed effectively (Expectation B10).

By September 2017:

- formalise and document the internal procedure for the design, development and approval of new programmes (Expectation B1)
- review and articulate the provider-level approach, including leadership responsibilities, to enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

David Game College Ltd satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

## About David Game College Ltd

Established in 1974, David Game College (the College) is an independent provider delivering further and higher education programmes to UK, EU and international students. The David Game Higher Education Centre (DGHE) was established at the College in 2013 and offers Pearson Higher National programmes at levels 4 and 5 in Business Management and Health and Social Care to UK and EU students.

The Higher Education Centre at David Game College exists to provide exceptional learning, encouraging students in developing their spirit of inquiry in order to realise their personal and professional aspirations, and potential, through quality education in a culturally diverse and ethical environment.

The College works with New College Swindon in a collaborative arrangement that enables DGHE students to access study and maintenance loans through the Student Loans Company (SLC). The subcontracting agreement with New College Swindon covers the Pearson HNC and HND programmes in Business, Health and Social Care, and Hospitality Management.

Currently, the College is based on a campus close to Notting Hill tube station. However, the College will be relocating to new premises in Aldgate during the early part of 2017. This will enable the College to consolidate its operations by moving all of its divisions, which include the Higher Education Centre, into one central location, provide improved facilities and offer greater opportunities for growth.

There are currently eight academic staff, all of whom teach on a part-time basis and two of whom also act in a management capacity. Academic staff are supported by senior management, management and administrative staff.

At the time of the review, the College offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath its awarding organisation with 2016-17 full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets.

### **Pearson**

- Higher National Diploma in Business (17).
- Higher National Diploma in Business Management (34).
- Higher National Diploma in Health and Social Care (74).

### **Major changes since the last QAA review**

The College has overseen a number of developments since its 2014 Review for Specific Course Designation, not least the lapse in course designation in 2014, which resulted in no recruitment to Pearson programmes during the 2014-15 academic year and the establishment of the relationship with New College Swindon.

### **Key challenges**

The College states in its self-evaluation document that the most significant challenge going forward is that of the move to new premises in Aldgate early in 2017. Plans are in place that will see a phased relocation commencing in January 2017 and continuing through to the end of the teaching year.

In addition, the uncertainties created by Brexit are giving cause for concern with regards to the long term recruitment potential of EU students. However, the College has put in place plans to focus on the UK and international markets.

### **The extent to which recommendations from the Review for Specific Course Designation 2014 have been addressed**

The Review for Specific Course Designation by QAA in 2014 concluded that confidence could be placed in the management of responsibilities for the standards of the programmes, and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities it offers on behalf of Pearson, and that reliance could be placed in the accuracy and completeness of information.

In 2014 the review team made six advisable and three desirable recommendations. The subsequent monitoring visit in 2015 confirmed that the College had made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.

In particular, the 2015 monitoring visit found that the Academic Infringement Committee terms of reference had been revised and it is clear under what circumstances the Programme Leader can make a decision without reference to the Committee. The Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy, within which the terms of reference sit, was further revised in May 2016.

In relation to clarifying the relationships and decision flows between committees, the 2015 annual monitoring team found that terms of reference, membership and standing orders, and the definition of a valid meeting for each committee, were presented in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The 2016 review team was presented with the revised 2016 version of the Handbook and was able to confirm this to be the case.

In 2015, students reported that the opportunity to obtain written and oral feedback within a workable timescale provided them with support to enhance their performance. Students whom the current review team met confirmed the same and spoke positively of the number of mandatory formative feedback opportunities made available to students prior to submitting assignments for summative assessment.

The 2015 annual monitoring team also reported that course evaluation questionnaires had been broadened to include questions about feedback; that a Staff Recruitment Policy is now in place; and that staff have access to training offered by Pearson. Staff appraisal is informed by peer observation, student feedback and self-evaluation. In addition, the responsibilities of the Programme Leader had been outlined in the job description and within the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, while the organisation's structure was clarified through the Programme Organisational Structure. Finally, the information on progression routes has been set in the University Progression Agreement and University Progression Handbook.

## Explanation of the findings about David Game College Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.1 The College delivers programmes on behalf of one awarding organisation, Pearson, which has ultimate responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards through its regulatory framework. The College currently offers Higher National programmes in Business, Business Management, and Health and Social Care.

1.2 Reference points include QAA, *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

1.3 The College has entered into a partnership with New College Swindon that enables students studying on the programmes offered on behalf of Pearson at David Game College Ltd to access student funding through the Student Loans Company. Students studying on Higher National programmes are registered with New College Swindon but taught by David Game College. Students are also registered with Pearson, although in this instance as David Game students. The College is obliged to deliver the programmes offered under this arrangement in accordance with the quality assurance arrangements of New College Swindon and to comply at all times with the quality assurance processes as set out in New College Swindon's policies.

1.4 The College's adherence to the policies and procedures of the awarding organisation would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team scrutinised the College's processes, and their effectiveness in maintaining academic standards, through consideration of quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, programme documentation and meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.6 For each programme, Pearson produces a set of programme specifications that lists the aims and learning outcomes to be achieved in addition to the number of credits to be awarded for each unit. There is management representation at external Pearson events and information, including policy changes, from these is fed back to the senior management team.

1.7 The College uses an external examiner system as one of its external reference points for the maintenance of academic standards, and programmes are reviewed and evaluated annually.

1.8 For each programme, the College produces a Programme Specification Handbook which contextualises the course delivery in terms of learning aims, key features of the programme, skills developed, teaching and learning strategies, programme structure, assessment strategies, and support for students. Each Handbook states the FHEQ level, the QCF descriptors and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement, validating body and qualification title.

1.9 Additionally, the College has a system of internal governance mechanisms by which standards are set and maintained. These include the overarching Quality and Standards Committee (QSC), which sets the strategic direction of the College, and a number of subcommittees that are responsible for operational directives. These include the Programme Management Committee (PMC), the Academic Infringement Committee (AIC), the Programme Assessment Board (PAB) and the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLIC).

1.10 Programme Managers have responsibility for the range of programmes within a particular curriculum area and ensure that the delivery of the programmes runs smoothly.

1.11 The College takes account of Subject Benchmark Statements and the South East England Consortium for Credit and Accumulation Transfer in the design and delivery of the academic research and computer skills course.

1.12 Students confirmed that the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria are clearly communicated through a number of channels, including during teaching sessions, via information provided by module lecturers, on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and within programme documentation.

1.13 The awarding organisation retains ultimate responsibility for securing threshold academic standards. On the basis of the evidence, which indicates adherence to the agreed processes, the review team concludes that the Expectation is 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**

1.14 The College operates within the prescribed regulations set out by its awarding organisation, Pearson, whose regulations make clear the frameworks and procedures that ensure the academic standards of the qualifications are met. As noted under Expectation A1, the College has entered into a partnership with New College Swindon and, as such, is also obliged to adhere to the policies and procedures of New College Swindon.

1.15 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook explains the strategic, administrative and academic direction of the College, and the committee structures responsible for delivering these. The terms of reference state the remit of the QSC, which has oversight of strategic operations, and the focus of these is ensuring and promoting quality, and safeguarding academic standards.

1.16 The awarding organisation's academic frameworks and supporting processes, and the College's management of its systems and processes, would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.17 To test this Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation including committee terms of reference and minutes of meetings, policies and processes, and met staff and students.

1.18 Pearson provides programme specifications for each programme and the College has systems in place for realising these. These include programme handbooks containing reference to national credit frameworks and QAA qualification characteristics, and an internal governance structure whose main focus is on the ongoing maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance.

1.19 The QSC is informed by various subcommittees. The PMC meets on a termly basis, and outcomes and action points feed into the QSC. Other committees, including the PAB and the Academic Misconduct Committee (AMC), convene on demand. Programme representatives sit on the SSLC and this provides an opportunity for students to inform and engage with decision-making processes. PABs meet formally on a termly basis to ratify results, and to discuss mitigating circumstances, progression and exit awards.

1.20 The external examiners review each programme annually and feedback is used by the College as a basis for improving systems and making adjustments to programmes as required. Reports demonstrate that the College is proactive in taking steps to address action points.

1.21 Members of the PMC meet to review aspects of the students' academic and social experience. They also hold responsibility for ensuring that the programmes remain fit for purpose.

1.22 The flow of information across the committee structure has become more effective since the QSC became an annual event. As much of the College's business is conducted at

subcommittee level, this arrangement allows more time to review and implement changes for the following academic year.

1.23 The College uses internally verified assignment briefs, and the templates for these and assessment feedback sheets are standardised across the programmes. Assignments are first marked then internally verified by a team member. Previously, the College used a system of peer verification. However, this proved lengthy and now programme leaders and managers verify assessment decisions. Feedback is provided to tutors on what can be improved. The College would like to revert back to the system of peer verification and introduce spot-checks to ensure that the process is working effectively. Overall, the system for internal verification is transparent and comprehensive.

1.24 The review team concludes that there are robust processes in place governing the award of academic credit and qualifications and that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.25 The College maintains a definitive record of each programme it delivers through programme specification handbooks. Pearson, as the awarding organisation, is responsible for the production of programme and unit specifications, while the College produces programme specification handbooks, which constitute the definitive record of each programme.

1.26 The College's approach to the production, approval, monitoring and amendment of definitive programme information in the form of programme specification handbooks is such that this Expectation would be met.

1.27 The review team tested the effective operation of these processes by examining a range of documentary evidence, including example programme specification handbooks. The review team also met senior staff responsible for the maintenance of academic standards, teaching staff and a selection of students.

1.28 Programme specification handbooks clearly communicate educational aims, intended learning outcomes, modes of assessment and the location of each programme on the FHEQ. Teaching staff are provided with programme specification handbooks as part of their induction to ensure that they are used as critical reference points in the delivery and assessment of each programme.

1.29 Programme specification handbooks are accessible to students through the College's VLE and are also provided to prospective students at admissions and induction events.

1.30 Programme specification handbooks are reviewed annually by the PMC to ensure their alignment with Pearson's programme specifications and to make any amendments where needed. Minor changes, for example to assessments, are made through Pearson's internal verification process.

1.31 Programme specification handbooks function as the definitive record for each programme the College delivers, and constitute the reference point for the assessment, delivery and review of its provision. The review team confirmed that these processes operate effectively in practice and that programme specification handbooks act as critical reference points for the College's provision.

1.32 The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.33 Formal responsibility for the approval of the Higher National Diploma programmes, including ensuring engagement with all relevant external expectations, lies with the awarding organisation, Pearson. The College's responsibility is limited to programme delivery and maintaining academic standards. This includes ensuring that procedures are in place to set assessments at an appropriate level, and ensure that they enable students to demonstrate achievement of the specified outcomes.

1.34 The awarding organisation, Pearson, conducts an Academic Management Review to monitor the College's capacity to deliver the programme effectively, and therefore its ability to maintain academic standards. This covers the adequacy of financial and physical resources, academic governance structures and quality assurance mechanisms, particularly in relation to module assessments.

1.35 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36 The review team tested the College's response through documentary study of the relevant sections of the self-evaluation document and minutes of meetings of senior staff, along with meetings with senior staff and tutors.

1.37 The review team found that staff understand, and are able to articulate, the division of responsibilities between Pearson and the College, and the processes by which the College discharges its responsibilities.

1.38 Proposals for new programmes are discussed informally by the senior management, based on the perceived market, financial considerations and staff resource. However, the College does not have an internal approval process by which it formally assures itself that a proposed programme is appropriate for it to deliver and that it has the capacity to deliver it effectively. This is discussed further under Expectation B1.

1.39 The review team concludes that the College understands its delegated responsibilities and discharges them effectively. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.40 The awarding organisation (Pearson) stipulates the unit learning outcomes and associated assessment strategies during validation, ensuring that they meet the requirements of the Quality Code and any related professional body benchmarks. The College plays a defined operational role in this process through the setting of assessments pursuant to Pearson guidelines and is responsible for writing and internally verifying assessment briefs for the HND programmes that it delivers.

1.41 The College also maintains responsibility for articulating programme outcomes that appear in the Programme Specifications. The latter also make reference to the FHEQ.

1.42 The College considers that it operates explicit, valid and reliable principles for assessment and aligns with *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code through its Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, published marking policies and assessment boards. The Assessment Policy contains detailed guidance for the setting of the assignment briefs, including internal verification (scrutiny) and assessment criteria, and the conduct of the assessment process, including marking, moderation, external examining and the role of the PAB. It also covers the related issues of mitigating circumstances, arrangements for recognition of prior learning, and procedures for the review and enhancement of the assessment process. The College also adheres to the assessment policy specified by its awarding organisation.

1.43 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.44 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with students and staff, and through a study of the documentary evidence including the assessment-related policies, along with external examiner (Standards Verifier) reports and minutes of the PAB.

1.45 The College has its own system of internal verification before assessments are released to students. All assessment decisions are internally verified in advance of the PAB and a process of external examining (through the Pearson Standards Verifier) ensures maintenance of appropriate standards. External examiner reports reveal satisfaction with the process and with standards attained by students.

1.46 The review team found that the College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, enabling students to demonstrate the extent to which they meet the learning outcomes. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated 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 understands that it has a role in quality monitoring of programmes and discharges its responsibilities for programme monitoring and review through the Annual Course Review (ACR). This self-evaluation includes an annual review of each programme that in turn contributes to the overall Quality Improvement Plan.

1.48 In addition, the PMC plays a major role in monitoring and review. The Committee is the formal system by which each programme is evaluated in terms of its teaching, learning and assessment strategies and by which best practices can be identified and supported. The PMC meets termly to review academic standards and to identify best practice and areas for enhancement of the student experience. Actions are identified for the programme leaders. Broader quality issues are addressed in the QSC.

1.49 These processes are then overseen by Pearson's annual monitoring report (AMR). This review covers a range of programme processes including admissions, management of assessments, resources, including staffing, and general policies and procedures. In addition, following the recent collaborative arrangement with New College Swindon from September 2015, the latter monitors and reviews the quality and effectiveness of the College's provision through annual self-assessment reports and monitoring visits, leading to a report and action plan.

1.50 As a result of the above, the College's processes for monitoring and review allow the Expectation to be met.

1.51 The review team met senior and teaching staff, and students, and analysed documentary evidence including annual course reports (ACRs), Pearson's AMRs and the Partner Visit Report of New College Swindon.

1.52 The ACR reports demonstrate rigorous self-evaluation and include detailed action plans that identify persons responsible for carrying out actions, incorporate target dates, and enable effective tracking of progress. The latest Pearson AMR, dated March 2016, demonstrates satisfaction with the Centre.

1.53 The review team noted that at this stage there is no process, beyond annual monitoring, to contribute to any periodic review of the programme given that the current higher education programmes have only been running for up to three years. Although ultimate responsibility for periodic review lies with the awarding organisation, the College may nevertheless consider that it has a responsibility to contribute to this process in due course and therefore to develop internal processes of its own.

1.54 The review team found that the internal processes of the College are effective and clearly understood by relevant members of staff. This is confirmed by Pearson's Academic Management Review for 2015-16. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.55 The College is responsible for maintaining the academic standards of the provision that it delivers to the standards set by the awarding bodies and through the application of academic frameworks and regulations.

1.56 The College relies mostly upon the expertise of the external examiners appointed by the awarding organisation to provide externality and for confirmation that threshold academic standards are appropriately maintained.

1.57 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.58 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with relevant staff and students and also through consideration of a range of documentation, including external examiner reports.

1.59 The College uses the expertise of independent external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The College clearly makes use of feedback provided by external examiners to improve the quality of the programmes. In order to develop its assessment and internal verification processes, it has engaged with feedback.

1.60 The programme specifications for the programmes set out the learning outcomes, and the assessment briefs provided to students are informed by these. Assessment criteria are clear. Tutors explain how to achieve a Pass, Merit and Distinction grade and these explanations are provided in the assignment briefs. Personal tutors are also available to meet with students to discuss their written work.

1.61 The College evaluates external examiner reports through ACR reports, and they are also discussed at PMC meetings.

1.62 The review team found that the College makes effective use of external examiners' reports; there is clear evidence that issues identified in reports have been addressed. The Expectation is therefore 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

1.63 In reaching its positive judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook and took into consideration that the College's awarding organisation has ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards. A positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining those standards.

1.64 The review team noted for this judgement area under Expectation A3.1 that the College does not have an internal approval process by which it formally assures itself that a proposed programme is appropriate for it to deliver and that it has the capacity to deliver it effectively. This is discussed further under Expectation B1. Under A3.3 the review team noted that there is no process beyond annual monitoring, to contribute to any periodic review programmes and that the College may consider that it has a responsibility to contribute to this process in due course.

1.65 Notwithstanding this, all of the Expectations in this area are met and the level of associated risk is low.

1.66 The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College on behalf of Pearson **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 Pearson, as the College's awarding organisation, is responsible for the overall programme design and approval at national level. The College acknowledges that it is responsible for delivery, including the design of learning strategies, teaching materials and assessments. This includes regular review to ensure continued validity and relevance. These reviews are conducted annually through the Programme Management Committee (PMC), which in turn reports to the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC).

2.2 The College's approach to this responsibility is centred on its quality management processes. The QSC is central to this exercise, having overall responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards. The QSC meets annually and its oversight includes consideration of all annual course reports, review of external examiner reports and actions taken, the Pearson Annual Management Report (AMR), and reviews of key educational strategies such as the learning and teaching strategy and student engagement.

2.3 These processes allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 To test this Expectation the review team met senior management, teaching staff and students and considered documentary evidence including minutes of meetings of senior staff.

2.5 The review team found that although procedures are in place that facilitate consideration of, and decisions on, those academic matters concerning the design and development of programmes within the College's responsibility, there is no discrete formal procedure for internal approval of programmes.

2.6 Currently, proposals for new programmes are discussed informally at senior management level, based on the perceived market, financial considerations and staff resource. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College formalises and documents the internal procedure for the design, development and approval of new programmes. This would provide a transparent forum, along with an audit trail, for decisions on the strategic direction of programmes, including academic matters concerning learning, teaching and assessment strategies and the choice of programmes and units.

2.7 The review team found, notwithstanding this recommendation, that the College discharges its responsibilities appropriately and effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.8 The College applies transparent and fair recruitment and admission procedures, which enables the selection of students who can achieve the intended learning outcomes of their chosen programme. Prospective students complete a written application form and subsequently attend an interview to determine their suitability for their chosen programme. These admissions processes are clearly articulated within the College's Admissions Policy.

2.9 Prospective students complete a written application form through which their application is assessed and a formal decision recorded. The prospective student is contacted within ten working days to arrange an admissions interview. The interview is used as a selection tool and is undertaken by the Head of Academic Administration (HoAA); it also encourages the early disclosure of any additional learning needs.

2.10 An admissions officer, in conjunction with programme teams and the Director of Higher Education, decide whether to make an admissions offer to a prospective student within ten working days, after which the prospective student receives an offer letter. The Head of Admissions has oversight over this process.

2.11 Admissions staff, in conjunction with the Director of Higher Education, ensure the provision of accurate and complete information to prospective students through the College website, programme specification handbooks, open days and other marketing materials, which clearly state entry requirements and the College's relationship with the awarding organisation.

2.12 The effective operation of these procedures would allow the expectation to be met.

2.13 The review team tested the operation of these processes by examining a selection of documentary evidence, including the College's Admissions Policy, Admissions Checklist Form and minutes of meetings between admissions staff. The review team also met professional support staff responsible for managing the admissions and induction process, senior staff and a range of students.

2.14 The team found these processes to operate effectively in practice. Students find the admissions interview helpful in informing their decision to apply to the College, and receive information tailored to their needs.

2.15 Prospective students are required to demonstrate proficiency in English by passing the College's internal English test, which is assessed at the admissions interview and also through a formal written test. The purpose of this test is clearly communicated to prospective students throughout the admissions process.

2.16 Admissions staff have regular meetings to monitor and review the College's admissions policies and procedures, and the College recognises the need to formalise these meetings further. The College's Admissions Policy is reviewed annually by the HoAA and the

Director of Higher Education, and the College collects student feedback on the admissions process to inform this review.

2.17 To submit an admissions appeal, students must write to the Principal and subsequently the Director of Higher Education, who makes a decision. If the prospective student remains dissatisfied they can appeal to the Admissions Appeal Board, whose decision is final.

2.18 To make an admissions complaint, the prospective student must write to the Head of Admissions, who makes a decision. If the prospective student remains dissatisfied they must submit a written appeal to the Principal.

2.19 The HoAA manages the induction of new students, which takes place within ten days of their registration and clearly explains their programme's content, assessment methods and the College's regulations. The College collects student feedback on induction, which is regularly reviewed by the HoAA, who makes any necessary improvements. The College also collects appropriate recruitment and admissions data to evaluate the effectiveness of its recruitment and admissions policies.

2.20 The College operates transparent, fair and inclusive recruitment and admissions procedures that enables the selection of students with the potential to complete their chosen programme. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.21 The College's learning and teaching strategy is underpinned by the Teaching and Learning Policy, which articulates its approach to enabling effective learning and teaching and learning environments, and student engagement in learning. The Policy is themed and includes recruiting and developing staff; quality enhancement; developing high quality programmes; managing the teaching and learning environment; equality of opportunity; and delivering excellent teaching and learning. Each section is linked to objectives and key performance indicators.

2.22 The College has processes in place to review the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, including student course evaluation questionnaires, peer observation of teaching, external examiner reports, and module, programme and ACR reports.

2.23 The procedures and processes in place to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.24 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation, policies and processes and met staff and students to determine the ways in which the College enhances the provision of learning and teaching practices so that every student is enabled to develop independently and to enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking.

2.25 The College manages the quality and enhancement of its learning opportunities through an academic framework that includes reference to the Quality Code, including the FHEQ, RQF, QCF, and its own organisational policies and procedures. There are a range of committees each with a rationale and terms of reference relevant to its purpose. The integrity of each committee is sound, with attendees varying to include standard committee members, representation from the awarding organisation and students. Minutes and outcomes of meetings are shared with students through the VLE.

2.26 Lecturers are appropriately qualified, with all holding master's or higher level qualifications; some hold PGCE HE teaching qualifications or HEA Fellow status, and some belong to professional bodies. Staff development events are offered internally and externally; funding is available if staff want to attend conferences and some staff members have been funded to take up a higher education teaching qualification. The College also engages Pearson to deliver training in various components of the programmes.

2.27 Guidance documents relating to teaching and learning issues are created by a Programme Leader and shared with staff through email, tutor meetings and the VLE. The Teaching and Learning Discussion Group provides an additional mechanism for sharing good practice, although the College acknowledges that this is not used as comprehensively as it could be.

2.28 The College operates a termly system of peer observation of teaching as a means of supporting the ongoing development of teaching and learning. Detailed guidelines for the

procedure are provided for observers and observees both pre and post-observation. Staff find this process useful and the management team has much experience in the process of observation.

2.29 The Programme Leader and HoAA manage and coordinate the activities of lecturing staff and actions and outcomes of team meetings are shared with them through email; they are invited to participate in training events as and when time allows. A tutor handbook and induction activities are provided and this is a useful reference point for the College's activities.

2.30 The College uses an English entrance test at the point of student application as a diagnostic tool for assessing capabilities, in addition to a computing skills entrance test. There is a clear link between the supplementary English and IT classes and the vocational delivery. Students who have English as an additional language are encouraged to attend the supplementary English classes.

2.31 The students receive a comprehensive induction on the first day of the programme. This covers academic matters, attendance requirements, assessment and grading, academic offences, programme structure and classroom behaviour. In addition, there is an administrative induction during which pastoral issues including students' welfare, the complaints procedure, College rules, and health and safety are explained. Students receive a file with all of the relevant documentation. Students' experience of induction is captured using questionnaires.

2.32 The College acknowledges that its cohort of students is a particularly diverse group of individuals and includes many who are mature returning-to-learning students with family and work commitments, health issues and, in some cases, additional learning needs. The College meets the needs of these students by offering a range of academic and pastoral support services, including English, study skills and drop-in sessions, and there is an on-site welfare officer whose responsibility it is to manage personal problems that might impact on academic progress.

2.33 The system of managing At Risk students is comprehensive; tutors signpost potential issues and interventions, mainly in the form of one-to-one individualised tutorials, are activated when necessary. In addition to the formal systems of support, there are many informal means by which students signal potential problems and staff are quick to deal with these. A good rapport clearly exists between the staff and students; staff know individual students by name and personal circumstance, and students value this highly. In the context of this organisation, students are enabled to progress in their learning as a result of the multi-layered approaches to support that the College puts in place.

2.34 The College has robust assessment systems in place and this was evident when the review team met staff and students; the College's approach to formative assessment is sound. Students submit first draft assignments for marking, and tutors annotate these with action points for further development. This feed-forward approach enables students to achieve the learning outcomes and meet the assessment criteria successfully. One staff member commented that it is not unusual for ex-students, who are studying at university, to return to the College to ask for assignment support.

2.35 Staff recognise that students are individuals and differentiate their planning, teaching and assessment practices to accommodate their needs. Strategies include using different learning resources, allowing extra time, clearly explaining learning outcomes and providing extra support. Tutors are mindful of the barriers to learning that can exist when students first begin studying and scaffold their learning and teaching approaches to build confidence.

2.36 The multi-layered and individualised systems of support that enable students to become independent learners and develop their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking are a feature of **good practice**.

2.37 The review team concludes that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure 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. The Expectation is therefore met and 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**

2.38 The College has a range of inclusive strategies in place for monitoring and evaluating students' academic, personal and professional development and tailors these to meet their diverse needs. Policies include the Academic Development Review Policy, the Student Welfare and Support Guide, the Disability Policy, the Equal Opportunities Policy, and Inclusivity Policy and Guide. These clearly demonstrate the College's understanding of, and responsibilities for, ensuring that all students have equal access to learning. The Admission Checklist provides an opportunity for students to declare special circumstances should they wish to do so.

2.39 Arrangements to support students in developing their academic, personal and professional potential would enable the College to meet Expectation B4.

2.40 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation, policies and processes and met students, academic staff and those providing professional support at the College.

2.41 Roles are clearly defined: the Programme Leaders and Personal Tutors are responsible for academic matters and the Head of Student Services assists with personal matters, such as accommodation and finance. Students requiring professional services such as counselling are referred to an external agency and this service is clearly useful. A 'Tutor on Duty' facilitates weekly academic drop-in support. The College operates an 'open-door' policy, which students appreciate.

2.42 The Academic Development Review Policy was extended in 2015 to include Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), and these are completed by the Work Experience Manager in discussion with the student. The ILP captures each student's career aspirations and academic goals, and they are revisited and revised each term. The use of ILPs is embedded within the College's infrastructure and these are used very effectively to identify possible work placement opportunities and academic targets. Lecturers use the information about students' targets to help inform their teaching. Additionally, they are used as a means by which progress can be measured. The comprehensive and consistent use of Individual Learning Plans, which are embedded across the provision and which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.43 Students have a range of ways through which to voice their feedback. The College's systems for capturing this are formalised through PMC meetings, the SSLC, termly module and course evaluation questionnaires as well as through informal means such as talking to a tutor. In addition, each programme has an elected student representatives to liaise between management and the student body. The systems are comprehensive and facilitate students' progress and development. Outcomes and actions of meetings are fed back to students through the VLE, and there is also a suggestion box available for student use.

2.44 The College provides resources including a VLE platform, computers, and a physical and online library of core texts and journals, which support students to develop their academic potential. Requests for additional and new resources are monitored on a termly basis. Pearson's Higher National Global free online resource is also available to students.

2.45 The review team heard that students have access to the facilities and benefits of New College Swindon, although distance makes travel to the College impractical and online access is currently limited. Students confirmed their understanding of the relationship with New College Swindon, as this is explained at the point of registration and during induction.

2.46 Staff expressed their belief in the robustness of the Pearson model as a sound basis for adaptation to meet the needs of a diverse community of students. The review team heard that the thoroughness of the learning and teaching approaches, resources, and supplementary classes prepare students for the transition to level 6 study.

2.47 On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the College has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, so that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk low.

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



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

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

**Findings**

2.48 The College takes deliberate steps to engage students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience through Course Evaluation Questionnaires, student participation at PMC and QSC meetings, and through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). These processes are clearly documented within its Student Engagement Policy.

2.49 The SSLC meets termly and comprises the Head of Student Services, student representatives from each programme and other relevant College staff. Any recommendations arising from student feedback at this meeting are passed on to the PMC and Director of Higher Education, with members of the SSLC informed of action taken at the next meeting or earlier. Student representatives attend key quality assurance committees such as the QSC and PMC and also manage a suggestion box through which students regularly feed back to the College.

2.50 Course Evaluation Questionnaires are undertaken electronically each term and collect student feedback on resources, administrative support and programme management, and are acted upon by the Director of Higher Education and Programme Managers and reviewed at PMC meetings.

2.51 The operation of these student engagement processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52 The review team tested the operation of these student engagement processes by analysing documentary evidence, including the College's Student Engagement Policy and SSLC minutes. The review team also met a selection of students from across the College's provision, senior staff and teaching staff.

2.53 The review team confirmed the effective operation of the College's student engagement processes. The SSLC is an effective forum for students to give feedback to the College regarding their educational experience, to identify what is working well and what could be improved, and the College is proactive in addressing any concerns raised. SSLC outcomes are effectively communicated to the wider student body through the student representation system. Student representatives receive a briefing and training from the College in which their responsibilities are clearly explained, and their role is clearly defined within the College's Student Engagement Policy.

2.54 The College recognises the importance of informal communication as a consequence of small class sizes, and has created a culture where students regularly feed back within both formal and informal engagement structures.

2.55 Through both formal and informal mechanisms, the College is proactive in collecting and responding to student feedback and engaging students as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of their learning opportunities. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.56 While the awarding organisation, Pearson, has responsibility for the unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria, the College is responsible for the overall assessment process including the setting, marking and moderation of assessments. The College's responsibilities in this respect include operational responsibility for setting assessments in direct compliance with awarding organisation requirements, the provision of generic grade descriptors contextualised for the particular assessment, the first-marking of student work followed by internal verification (second-marking or moderation) and then providing feedback to students on their work. The College's Assessment and Verification policy is stated to be aligned with the relevant Expectation of the Quality Code. The Programme Specifications identify the number and frequency of assessments.

2.57 These processes and arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team tested the College's response through scrutiny of its assessment-related policies, minutes of relevant meetings, and samples of external examiner reports and assessment feedback. The review team also met senior staff, tutors and students.

2.59 The College has a comprehensive Assessment and Verification Policy in addition to a range of supporting policies to inform its assessment practices. A range of assessment methods are used to meet the assessment criteria including portfolios, class presentations, written assignments, poster presentation and time-constrained tests.

2.60 The College operates its own system of internal verification before assessments are released to students. Thereafter, all assessment decisions are internally verified in advance of the Programme Assessment Board and a process of external examining (through the Pearson Standards Verifier) ensures maintenance of appropriate standards. The College also has a policy and process for making reasonable adjustments in assessments for students with special needs. External examiners' reports reveal general satisfaction with the assessment process and standards obtained by the students.

2.61 Feedback is given to students on their assessed work using Grade Mark and they have the opportunity to discuss performance with their Personal Tutor. Students spoke highly of the helpful feedback on their formative assessments, which includes advice on how to improve and what is expected at the higher grades.

2.62 The Programme Assessment Board (PAB) oversees the whole process and confirms results as well as considering academic misconduct issues and applications for mitigating circumstances.

2.63 The College's stance on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is that RPL is largely restricted to the acceptance of credit transfers from another Pearson qualification of an equivalent level and where clear mapping of subject matter is evident. Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

2.64 The review team found that the College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, enabling students to demonstrate the extent to which they meet the learning outcomes. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated 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**

2.65 The nomination, appointment, training and management of external examiners falls within the remit of the regulations and processes of Pearson as the awarding organisation. The PMC receives external examiner reports and the HoAA produces a summary report that highlights action points.

2.66 The College views the external examiners' input and feedback to be critical in the role of quality assurance. Assessment practices are underpinned by the Academic Appeals Policy, Academic Development Review Policy, Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy, and Assessment and Internal Verification Policy.

2.67 Students submit their course work using Grade Mark and Turnitin software, and this is marked by course tutors and internally verified by another team member. A range of work is then sampled by the external examiners, who provide feedback in the form of a report. Students are provided with assignment briefs to guide their work and these are internally verified before being released.

2.68 The selection and recruitment of external examiners by the awarding organisation, and the consideration of external examiner reports by the College, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.69 The review team scrutinised documentation, policies and processes and met staff and students to determine the ways in which the College has systems in place to ensure that it makes scrupulous use of external examiners.

2.70 The external examiners' annual review of programmes results in reports that identify areas of good practice and areas for development. The review team heard from staff that, in the first instance, external examiner reports are discussed at tutor meetings. These are also shared and discussed at PMC meetings, where decisions are made about enhancement of the provision. PABs are also used as a forum by which reports and issues are discussed.

2.71 To aid implementation of actions and tracking, the HoAA produces a report that summarises the external examiners' findings. The report findings are outlined in the ACR action plans with due dates and are received by QSC. Minutes of meetings are shared with tutors and students through the VLE. Reports are made available to students through the VLE.

2.72 The College engages actively with the external examiners, as demonstrated in the reports, and is proactive in regard to addressing actions. External examiners express satisfaction with the internal systems of the College in promptly identifying and addressing issues.

2.73 The review team found that within its delegated responsibilities the College makes scrupulous use of external examiners. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.70 The College acknowledges that its ongoing role in maintaining the academic standards of the programmes delivered by it is achieved through the annual course monitoring process known as the Annual Course Review (ACR). This is focused on the activities of the PMC, which meets termly to review module reports, student feedback and annual evaluation of data, including student performance and external examiner reports. Two further layers of monitoring are provided by Pearson AMRs and also the additional monitoring conducted under the collaborative arrangement with New College Swindon. The latter is essentially a subcontracting arrangement to enable the College's students to qualify for student loans. In each case the annual reviews cover the effectiveness of the College's provision and its leadership and management.

2.71 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.72 The review team tested the College's response through analysis of the ACRs and the Pearson and New College annual reports, review of minutes of both the PMCs and the annual QSC, and in with meetings of senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.73 The ACRs involve a consideration of tutor module reports, student feedback and external examiner reports, along with action points from the PMC and reports from the SSLC. There is also analysis of key data including entry qualifications, student 'wastage' and progression statistics, along with completion, qualification and destination outcomes. Action plans are maintained detailing responsibilities, dates for completion, commentary on progress and the impact on the learning experience of students.

2.74 Following consideration of the ACRs by the PMC, the ACRs are subsequently considered at the annual meeting of the QSC, where actions are identified and tracked and programme enhancements agreed. These are supplemented by the Pearson AMRs and the Partner Visit Report of New College Swindon.

2.75 As previously mentioned in A3.3, at this stage there is no process, beyond annual monitoring, to contribute to any periodic review of the programme given that the current higher education programmes have only been running for up to three years. The College may consider that it has a responsibility to the awarding organisation to contribute to this process in due course and therefore to develop processes of its own.

2.76 On the basis of consideration of the documentary evidence mentioned above, the positive nature of the Pearson AMRs and the informative meetings with senior and teaching staff and students, the review team found that the College operates comprehensive, effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review of its programmes, all clearly understood by relevant members of staff. The Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.77 The College uses various mechanisms for effectively and transparently managing complaints and academic appeals. The College's complaints and appeals processes are clearly established within its Academic Appeals Policy, Student Complaints Policy and its Academic Complaints Policy and these processes are clearly explained to students.

2.78 To submit an academic appeal, a student must complete an Application for Academic Appeal Form to the HoAA. The HoAA will subsequently pass the appeal submission to the Chair of the Programme Assessment Board (PAB) and the PAB Chair will, within ten working days, inform the HoAA of the decision of the Board. The HoAA will inform the student of the outcome within five working days and a completion of proceedings letter is issued. The College's Academic Appeals Policy informs students that once they have exhausted the College's internal process without satisfactory resolution they can embark upon Pearson's appeals process.

2.79 The College emphasises the importance of the informal resolution of complaints before students embark upon the formal process. If a student has a complaint, the College encourages them to raise it informally with the member of staff concerned, who will take any required action within ten working days. If the student remains dissatisfied, they can approach the Programme Leader, who will take any necessary action and issue a written response if needed. This ends the informal process.

2.80 To submit a formal complaint, a student must complete a written application and send it to the Director of Higher Education, who will issue a response within 20 working days. If the student remains dissatisfied, they can attend a hearing of the Complaints Panel, convened by the Chair of the College's Board of Advisors, who will issue a response within 14 working days. This is the end of the College's formal complaints procedure. Once students have exhausted the College's formal internal processes, they are able to access the Office of the Independent Adjudicator to seek a resolution.

2.81 The effective operation of these complaints and appeals procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.82 The review team tested these procedures by examining a selection of documentary evidence, including the College's Academic Appeals Policy and its Student Complaints Policy. The review team also met with senior staff and professional support staff responsible for the management of complaints and academic appeals, in addition to a range of students.

2.83 The review team confirmed the effective functioning of these procedures. The HoAA is responsible for logging and monitoring complaints relating to academic matters, and the Head of Student Support is responsible for logging and monitoring complaints related to non-academic matters.

2.84 The College's complaints and appeals processes are clearly communicated to students through the VLE and the College website. Students who wish to make a formal complaint or academic appeal can receive support and guidance from the Head of Student Support and the HoAA. The College's academic appeals and complaints processes are also

explained to students at induction. The review team noted that the College has never received a formal complaint.

2.85 The College operates fair and transparent procedures for handling student complaints and academic appeals, and these procedures are clearly communicated to students. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.86 The College is a delivery organisation for Pearson Higher National programmes and, as such, is not ultimately responsible for the management of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. The College does, however, have responsibility for the effective management of its arrangements with employers and placement providers where learning opportunities within the work environment constitute an integral aspect of the student's programme.

2.87 Currently, the processes in place for students and placement providers that seek to ensure that students are prepared for, and supported during, a placement are underdeveloped. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the College fully develops work experience policies and procedures to ensure that work placements are implemented securely and managed effectively.

2.88 The College's arrangements for the management of the learning opportunities agreed with others do not enable Expectation B10 to be met.

2.89 The review team scrutinised the evidence provided by the College, and held a series of meetings with teaching and professional support staff, senior management and students.

2.90 The Personal and Professional Development (PPD) module includes a requirement for students to complete 200 hours of work experience; the College intends to divide this between 100 hours of preparation-for-work activities and a 100-hour work placement carried out in a vocationally relevant context; for example, working in a care home or early years setting. The work placement is mandatory and enables students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Assessment for the unit is by portfolio (50 per cent), journal (30 per cent) and presentation (20 per cent). Confirmation that tasks have been carried out will be validated and authenticated by the employer and assessed by the tutors at the College. The College intends to make use of Pearson's assignment checking service to confirm that the assessments are fit for purpose.

2.91 The College is in the process of developing its systems and procedures for managing and quality assuring work placements for the first small cohort of Health and Social Care students, who are due to begin in April 2017. The College acknowledges that there will be challenges in placing the September 2017 cohort, which will be larger.

2.92 The College has an existing network of employer contacts and is extending these through contacts with external organisations. For example, there was a recent Careers Fair where organisations and universities exhibited, and this was a positive step towards developing existing networks.

2.93 The mechanism for identifying a suitable work placement is the Individual Learning Plan, which captures the students' career ambitions; the intention is to match these to an appropriate setting.



2.94 Management of the work placements element of the programme is overseen by the Work Experience Manager, who has industry links and previous experience of employability and internships, and who will use that experience and information to identify appropriate work opportunities.

2.95 Procedural documents, including a student and employer handbook, a risk assessment and student placement checklist, a PPD module descriptor and a letter confirming the responsibilities of the student, College and employer are being produced. Once the student handbook has been produced, the College intends to consult with the students and adapt as appropriate.

2.96 Both staff and students view the work placement positively as a mechanism by which theory and practice can be interlinked.

2.97 Overall, although under development, the College has little in the way of formal arrangements in place to deliver the work-based element of the HND Health and Social Care programme. Arrangements made to date are not complete and would not ensure that students are prepared for, and supported during, a placement. The review team makes one recommendation under this Expectation for the College to develop fully its work experience policies and procedures to ensure that work placements are implemented securely and managed effectively. The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is not met and that the risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Not met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

### **Findings**

2.98 David Game College does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.99 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met with low risk, with the exception of Expectation B10. The review team considers that Expectation B10 is not met and that there is a moderate risk to student learning opportunities.

2.100 The review team identified two areas of good practice in the approach taken by the College to managing the quality of student learning opportunities. These were the multi-layered and individualised systems of support that enable students to become independent learners and develop their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking; and the comprehensive and consistent use of Individual Learning Plans, which are embedded across the provision and which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.101 There are two recommendations in this judgement area: that the College formalise and document the internal procedure for the design, development and approval of new programmes; and to develop fully its work experience policies and procedures to ensure work placements are implemented securely and managed effectively.

2.102 The moderate risk attached to Expectation B10 does not present any serious risks to the management of this area as the problems identified are confined to a small part of the provision.

2.103 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities provided by 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's comprehensive approach to the management of information for a diverse range of stakeholders about its provision, mission and quality assurance procedures is clearly articulated within its Managing Information Policy.
- 3.2 Marketing material is drafted by the Director of Higher Education, who completes a final sign-off form to confirm accuracy and their alignment with the requirements of the awarding organisation, while the HoAA has oversight of internal information created for staff and students.
- 3.3 The QSC is responsible for the dissemination of accurate and reliable information to students about their programmes of study.
- 3.4 The College website is an important source of information for prospective students and the Director of Higher Education, in conjunction with the administration team, is responsible for the accuracy of any updates. Prospective students have access to information about the College's provision on open days and similar events, and this information is also circulated electronically.
- 3.5 The College's Policy on Student Registration and Certificates specifies the process for students to be provided with a record of their study.
- 3.6 The effective operation of these information policies would enable the Expectation to be met.
- 3.7 The review team tested the operation of these processes by examining a range of documentary evidence, including the College's Managing Information Policy, and information provided to prospective and current students. The review team also met senior staff, teaching staff and professional support staff responsible for the management of information, in addition to a selection of students.
- 3.8 The review team confirmed the effective operation of these processes. Students find the information they receive during the admissions and induction process trustworthy and fit for purpose, and that information about their programme's content is clear and accessible.
- 3.9 Students undertake an induction when they commence study at the College, through which they receive information about their programme's content, assessment methods and College regulations.
- 3.10 For information contained within the VLE, module leaders submit a separate audit form to the College's Internal Verifier, which clearly specifies the required information that must be included for each module and contains programme specification handbooks and other relevant information regarding programme content and College procedures. Students find the VLE highly helpful in supporting their learning.

3.11 Staff are provided with appropriate information regarding the College's quality assurance processes, such as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, at their induction.

3.12 The College has effective policies and procedures to ensure the information that it produces for all audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

3.13 In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low.

3.14 The College produces a variety of information in different forms and for different audiences that is generally sound and trustworthy. The College makes good use of its website, which is an important source of information for prospective students, and of the VLE, which current students find helpful in supporting their learning. Staff are provided with appropriate information through the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

3.15 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities provided by the College about its provision **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 Enhancement is stated to be at the heart of the College's culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement. This involves a review of a range of programme data by the QSC and an ensuing action plan, now embodied in the annual Quality Improvement Plan introduced during 2015-16. The range of programme data used includes external examiner (Standards Verifier) reports, internal verification procedures, peer observations and staff development activities, student feedback, and the ACR and evaluations, which include a section specifically on Enhancement.

4.2 Progress is monitored termly through the PMC and SSLC, and the impact is reviewed annually through the QSC and the Senior Management Team.

4.3 These arrangements are designed to allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised the documentation provided on enhancement strategy, policies, committee structures, minutes of meetings and action plans, all referred to above. The review team also met senior staff, teaching and professional support staff to discuss the College's approach to Enhancement.

4.5 The College's approach to enhancement is referred to in the Learning and Teaching Policy (Theme 2 - promoting College-wide enhancement), and key performance indicators (KPIs) within that strategy include reference to annual College and course reports, along with securing positive student and external examiner feedback. Furthermore, the Learning and Teaching Discussion Group provides opportunity for the academic team to discuss formally or informally all aspects of programme delivery and the student experience. This provides a useful forum for the discussion of enhancement. Enhancement is not otherwise articulated discretely in overall policy documents but appears in the standard agenda headings of the QSC and PMC.

4.6 While many examples of enhancement were identified, including the comprehensive assessment feedback to students, individualised support for weak students, the use of Individual Learning Plans, and the PPD module including work-experience, the review team found enhancement activity to be 'on the ground' and that the College's response to the requirement for a provider-level approach is not wholly systematic nor clearly articulated, although the process leading to the production of ACR reports does generate initiatives from the analysis of data.

4.7 The strategic approach to enhancement is largely based around the annual review of the programme monitoring data by the QSC. While this is comprehensive and captures initiatives for enhancement identified by the programme teams, there may also be opportunities for the College management to strengthen the integration of enhancement initiatives through a more pro-active approach in a systematic and planned manner at provider level. Accordingly, the review team **recommends** that the College reviews and articulates the provider-level approach, including leadership responsibilities, to enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.8 Overall, while the systematisation that will embed enhancement in routine operations is not fully developed, the review team acknowledges that the College is aware of

the importance of enhancement and has demonstrably taken some deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The review team considers, therefore, that the Expectation is met; however, the associated risk is moderate. This arises due to the lack of clarity about responsibilities in enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**



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

4.9 In determining its positive judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met but that the risk to student learning opportunities is moderate, and this is supported by one recommendation that the College reviews and articulates the provider-level approach, including leadership responsibilities, to enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.10 While enhancement is stated to be at the heart of the College's culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement the review team found that much enhancement activity is below provider level. Notwithstanding this, the review team found that the College has taken some deliberate steps through the QSC to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.11 Overall, therefore, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### 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.

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