



Higher Education Review of Derby College

May 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Derby College. The review took place from 18 to 20 May 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Jonathan Baker
- Dr Simon Jones
- Ms Emma Palmer (student reviewer)

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Derby College

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

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Derby College:

- the higher education academic governance structure which empowers academic and support staff from all levels to develop, maintain, deliver and enhance provision (Expectations A2.1, B3, B4 and Enhancement)
- the rigorous, comprehensive and inclusive internal programme design, approval, monitoring and modification processes, which enables the College to design programmes to meet the needs of learners and local, regional and national employers (Expectations A3.1, B1, B5 and B8)
- the introduction into Pearson examination boards of staff from the regional college network in order to provide externality (Expectation A3.2)
- the investment in, and comprehensive support for, higher education-specific staff professional development, which enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices (Expectation B3 and Enhancement)
- the extensive links with industry which ensure the currency of provision and enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4)
- the contextualised higher education learner voice process, which is inclusive of all students (Expectation B5)
- the effective management of a wide range of formal and informal partnerships with employers which secures a high quality learning experience for all students (Expectation B10 and Enhancement)
- the deliberate steps taken by the College to identify, support and disseminate good practice, and create a higher education community that enhances the students' learning opportunities (Expectation Enhancement and B8).

Recommendations

There are no **recommendations** to Derby College.

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The introduction of the HE Learning Services Advisor role to standardise the higher education admissions process and support internal progression from further education provision (Expectations B2 and C).

Theme: Student Employability

The College states its main reason for the delivery of higher education is to offer vocationally relevant courses which allow students to become more employable. The College strategy is focused on improving the life chances of people and businesses in the community it serves.

The College has a long history of close working with employers, including national employers such as Rolls Royce and JCB. Between 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years there was a 20 per cent increase in the volume of employers with whom higher education teams are engaged.

The majority of students are employed so their higher education studies are aimed at enhancing employability and to build on their intellectual and social skills. The College has therefore involved employers in development and validation of programmes. To build on this, the College's Business Development Team, which is an employer-facing area of the College, is meeting with the Higher Education Manager monthly to explore ways of greater collaboration and synergy with employers. The Business Development Director has joined the HE Academic Board to advise on key parts of curriculum development. The College has also undertaken employer surveys to evaluate the benefit to their business of having employees attending the College.

Employers and students involved in the development and reviews of programmes are well informed and enthusiastic about benefits of the College's provision.

All employers have an account manager and employability is increasingly embedded into the day to day practices of higher education at the College. Mentors support students in their work and there are regular visits from tutors to check on progress. Mentors are also invited to supervisory meeting with tutors. Teams also meet with employers sending students on programmes on a monthly basis to discuss progress.

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

About Derby College

Derby College is a general further education college located in Derbyshire. Its main campus, the Roundhouse, is next to Derby railway station and relocated to its present site in 2003 following a capital strategy which transformed the majority of its estate. The College has four main campuses with higher education provision delivered at the Roundhouse and its land-based campus at Broomfield Hall, approximately six miles away.

The current number of higher education students studying at the college is 419 representing a 67 per cent increase in students over a three-year period. This is within a student body of approximately 6,000 16-18 year olds and a further 20,000 adult, part-time and apprenticeship learners. Higher education represents about five per cent of the College's current turnover (£2.3 million of a £55 million College) and the ambition is to grow it to 10 per cent of turnover by 2018.

The majority of the College's higher education students study part-time and are employed. The College works in partnership with three degree-awarding bodies: the University of Derby, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University, plus Pearson for its HNC/D provision on a mixture of franchised and validated arrangements. The partnerships with the degree-awarding bodies extend beyond simple validation and franchise arrangements to support improving teaching and learning and the aspirations of staff and students.

The College currently is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) for its Foundation Degree in Construction Management. In 2014 the Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering went through an approval event with the Institution of Engineering Technology, and at the review visit verbal confirmation of approval was received by the College.

Taking into account Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities and to reflect the vocational nature of our provision, the College has strong links with local employers such as Rolls Royce and JCB. The number of employers the College currently works with has grown from 42 in 2013-14 to 48 in 2014-15 with this trend set to continue.

The College mission statement is: 'Preparing individuals for the next phase of their lives: the world of work, entrepreneurship, advanced learning, career progression and to contribute as positive citizens.' In 2014, a new Derby College Strategic Plan was implemented, which is underpinned by four key ambitions.

- Ambition one: Transform our learners' experience
- Ambition two: Revolutionise our offer
- Ambition three: Contribute to economic growth and social prosperity
- Ambition four: Invest in our learning environments by improving our financial performance.

Following the appointment of a new HE Manager in April 2014 a new HE Strategic Plan has also been implemented which sits within the whole College approach. It identifies the following growth opportunities:

- growing the size of provision to better align with further education programmes to provide positive progression for learners who are not yet progressing to higher level skills in the College
- growing provision with a broader range of employers in a broader range of employment areas so that local demand for higher level skills can be met
- fulfilling a widening participation agenda for the area by working with partners to offer routes and pathways into Higher Education that they do not offer, such as part-time in-service routes
- building internal capacity of College support services to understand higher education so that planning for growth is easily accommodated
- developing a broader higher education community within the College to better understand the data about HE to make better systematic College-wide decisions about the College's higher education provision.

There has been a number of changes since the last QAA review, the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review in 2011. Management team changes have caused a period of transition in higher education. In 2012 the current Chief Executive was appointed following the retirement of the previous Principal. While the College has maintained a senior lead for higher education, the person occupying this role has changed three times since the last QAA review owing to people leaving and curriculum re-alignment. The current senior lead is a member of the College's Executive and has been in the role since October 2013. The previous HE Manager left the College in October 2013 to take up a post elsewhere. This left a gap in middle management that curriculum team managers had to fill until the replacement HE Manager started in mid-April 2014. The College's Quality Team appointed a new Quality Manager who started in December 2013. This role has a wide remit but initially one day a week was dedicated to supporting higher education. This is currently extended to two days to support the implementation of new processes. The College has appointed a new Vice Principal for Quality and Strategic Planning who started in November 2014. Additionally, as the volume of engineering employer-based higher education activity is growing, the College

appointed a Team Manager in Engineering to lead on the higher education programmes, and a new Director of Engineering (who formally worked at Rolls-Royce) came into post in March 2014.

These changes in leadership have been reflected in changes to the higher education committee structures and a number of new committees or realigned committees have come into existence providing a more robust structure for the strategic oversight of higher education.

This significant period of change has resulted in a number of outcomes including the development of a higher education community and previous processes, such as admissions which sat outside College's systems, have now been re-established to capitalise on the expertise available and to accommodate for further growth.

The new HE Manager helped to establish a Peer Review Research and Development (PRRD) Group between Derby College, Leicester College, and Central College Nottingham. The group formed to explore issues that are pertinent to college-based higher education. Currently, the group is working together to support tutors to achieve fellowships on the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), and as such all partners have individually joined the Higher Education Academy (HEA). This group has just received Catalyst Funding through the Association of Colleges (AoC) to be a national pilot for some college based higher education scholarly activity work for the next three years. The Group also provides externality for each other to review policies and procedures, and support with implementing major policy change.

Key challenges include the pace of change at the College and in higher education leadership means that achieving the mission and improving quality has been one of constant reflection. Processes are taking the expected time to embed, and staff have to become used to the language of higher education as opposed to that of further education. There has therefore been a range of simple 'upskilling' actions that has been taking place to raise awareness of higher education. The challenge of improving the cohesiveness of the teams delivering HNC/Ds continues within the College. The teams have been based in a range of curriculum areas in the College and they have less contact with Pearson than programmes with degree-awarding bodies have with link tutors. While the work the College does with employers is considered its 'flagship' provision the very nature of programme development with employers means that additional time is needed to ensure that it works well and the College is responsive. As most students are part-time and employed, getting feedback from them has been challenging. The College is committed to providing progression opportunities for students coming into and leaving higher education. However, with all the management changes, understanding of Widening Participation measures, the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE), and the progress of students 'topping-up' at the College's partners has been limited. Working on this is a Core Aim in the new strategy. Underpinning all of this has been the need for improved communication in higher education and the College has developed a number of strategies to achieve this including regular updates from the HE manager and the development of the College higher education intranet site.

The College has made good progress with the recommendations of the last QAA review (IQER in 2011) particularly in the areas of College higher education management, the committee structure and capturing the student voice.

Explanation of the findings about Derby College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College, in its self-evaluation documents, states that it works closely with its awarding bodies and organisation in the approval and review of its higher education programmes. Awarding partners set the standards for the College's programmes through their own academic frameworks and regulations.

1.2 University of Derby programmes are developed and approved in accordance with their validation requirements which engage with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The Sheffield Hallam University Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering is a franchised programme. There is a Programme Manual and a Definitive Document which sets out the programme operation together with programme specifications and mapping to the FHEQ and in relation to the benchmarks for Foundation Degrees. The Nottingham Trent University Foundation Degree in Construction Management has moved from a franchised agreement to a validated model meaning the College has undergone partner validation. The College has worked with the University to ensure that alignment with the FHEQ and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* is maintained. All Pearson (HNC/D) programmes are aligned with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and then are considered for equivalence to the FHEQ. There are no

centre-devised units in operation. The College's policies and procedures and the close working relationships with its awarding bodies allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

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

1.4 External examiner reports reflect that academic standards are being met at appropriate levels and that learning outcomes are being met. Together with external examiners and Standards Verifier reports the College conducts annual monitoring reviews for all programmes which further assures the maintenance of academic standards.

1.5 Staff are knowledgeable about the academic standards relating to programmes and students are aware of academic standards and regulations pertaining to their programmes. The strong links with industry and employers has had a positive influence on the composition of programme content. For example the College with input from JCB has developed a hydraulics unit for the Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering.

1.6 The College has well established contact with link tutors from awarding bodies and MELD (Multi Education Learning and Development online action planning system), a computer-based system developed to monitor and track actions with target dates accessible to staff and senior managers. The system can be used to create alerts when target deadlines are approaching and helps to ensure that action points from external examiner reports are dealt with effectively. Overall the review team concludes that this ensures that Expectation A1 is met. The policies and processes the College has ensures that standards are being met and the robust systems in place means 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

1.7 The College states that awarding body and organisation regulations govern the award of academic credit and qualifications for its higher education programmes to which the College adheres.

1.8 The awarding bodies and organisation have clear guidelines for programme development and approval which detail alignment with the FHEQ and relevant subject and qualification benchmarks, and inform programme specifications. The College also has its own Higher Education Course Approval and Development Procedure that clearly sets out the procedure for pre-course approval before relevant awarding partners are approached, based on clear demand for the provision, a clear implementation plan and a sound approach to assessment, teaching and learning and are in line with the Quality Code

1.9 For University of Derby programmes, all student work is second-marked by the University for the first year of the programme and then moderated on a sample and risk procedure. The College Higher Education Manager is also now a member of the University Collaborative Partners Sub-Committee to ensure the College engages with University of Derby processes. The Nottingham Trent University Quality Manual has clear processes for exam boards and awards and, although a validated centre, the College continues to use the universities' assessment regulations. Sheffield Hallam University has three module boards per year and considers marked and moderated work from the College. Pearson programmes are subject to External Verifier inspection and internal verification. Course teams until recently ran their own exam boards. To strengthen the assurance of academic standards in these programmes, the College has now introduced institutional exam boards and a standard Student Course Handbook. The review team finds that Colleges policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

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

1.11 The College has established a strong academic governance structure for higher education through the development of its own institutional examination boards to strengthen Pearson programmes, the inclusion of the Higher Education Manager on the universities' collaborative committees and the College's own higher education course approval process.

1.12 External examiner reports support the upholding of standards and the process of the academic quality reviews and exam boards. The College has together with the examination boards and processes of the degree-awarding bodies established an internal formal examination board for Pearson programmes to enhance the assurance of academic standards. External examiners attend all Exam Boards and the awarding bodies send representatives through a University Verifier or link tutor. Staff and students demonstrated confidence in the processes and students are aware of the levels they need to attain in assessments and how the process works. The College restructure of governance approach, to provide greater focus for the higher education provision within its operation, has provided

opportunities through the Higher Education Committee to integrate initiatives from teaching and support staff together with industry and employers' views which support academic standards and benefit the student experience. The review team considers that the higher academic governance structure which empowers academic and support staff from all levels to develop, maintain, deliver and enhance provision is **good practice**.

1.13 The review team concludes that the College, with its relationships and well established links with awarding partners, has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications and that Expectation A2.1 is met and that the well established processes and procedures mean that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.14 The degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation of the programmes at the College, which have a variety of franchised and validated agreements, have the overall responsibility of approving programme specifications in accordance with external references such as the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, assessment regulations of the awarding partners and information about accreditation and learning outcomes.

1.15 The academic governance at the College follows the awarding partners' regulations and shows clear responsibilities between both the College and each awarding partner. The College governance arrangements together with the College policies and procedures allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.16 The team tested the Expectation by examining partnership responsibilities, the VLE, programme handbooks, programme specifications annual monitoring forms (including action plans), minutes and the terms of reference of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), the matrix of regulations within higher education, the higher education intranet, higher education strategy and higher education teaching and learning strategy, and the procedures for the major and minor modification for higher education programmes. The review team also held meetings with the senior management team, academic teaching staff, link tutors of the awarding bodies and the external stakeholders.

1.17 Programmes validated through Pearson follow a standard template for the programme specifications, while other programmes validated by the Universities of Derby, Sheffield Hallam and Nottingham Trent all follow individual processes in accordance with the awarding bodies' regulations. Awards are confirmed at the exam boards; all awarding bodies hold a central record of approved awards, although the Nottingham Trent University-validated programmes receive this information from the College. Pearson produces the transcripts and certification once it receives the Student Record Form so Pearson controls the process at this stage.

1.18 In addition, the College has an internal process for both major and minor modifications to programmes on which the College works with link tutors of the awarding bodies and external stakeholders to ensure that the modifications are meeting professional standards. This is reviewed and approved at the AQSC before going to the awarding body for final approval. Programme specifications can be found on the virtual learning environment (VLE) with hard copies available if requested. All programmes have an annual monitoring form which includes the action plans following stakeholders' contributions which are reviewed at the AQSC.

1.19 The team found that the policies and procedures were clearly effective and concise both internally at the College and within the regulations of the awarding bodies and organisation. Information on the programmes were found to be accurate and accessible, and students whom the team met were able to identify the credits and learning outcomes of the programmes and source the programme specifications on the VLE.

1.20 Stakeholders were able to explain and evidence how they contribute to the programme reviews, such as annual monitoring forms including student and employers' contributions, some of which have led onto modifications of the programmes. An example of this is the modification of a hydraulics module in the Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering, which was deemed to be a positive contribution following the communication from the College, link tutor of Sheffield Hallam University and the employers.

1.21 The team also found the internal major and minor modifications' process demonstrated clear governance and structure in accordance with the Quality Cycle and the internal verification and quality assurance policy. Actions following these are not only included within the action plans of the Annual Monitoring Reviews (AMRs), but are tracked on the College's internal software, MELD, which demonstrated transparency throughout the process. The review process of any programme has been evidenced to follow the guidelines and regulations of the awarding bodies, which also helps to provide assurance for developing and amending programmes in accordance to the FHEQ and relevant subject and qualification benchmarks.

1.22 The College fulfils its responsibilities and has demonstrated effective procedures and policies both internally and in its relationships with its awarding bodies and awarding organisation. The review team found significant evidence of how the College demonstrates this especially within the engagement of stakeholders and the modification process for programmes that awarding bodies review and validate/revalidate. The processes, both internally and in accordance to the regulations of the awarding bodies, are clear and informative for all stakeholders. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 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

1.23 The College recognises that its awarding partners set the standards of the College's programmes and seeks to ensure that all new programmes meet the College's strategic aims, employer and student needs through the application of their own academic frameworks and regulations. The College has an internal process for the approval of all new courses, and a supporting governance structure to ensure the strategic approach the College is taking is understood at all levels of management, teaching and support staff. Awarding bodies and organisation retain validation responsibility for ensuring compliance with the FHEQ and professional benchmarks; approving module content, associated learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the courses delivered on their behalf by the College. The awarding bodies and organisation also retain responsibility for revalidating programmes delivered on their behalf by the College.

1.24 The College has a strictly defined higher education framework for consistently implementing processes for the approval of taught programmes, that ensures it is implementing degree-awarding partners' regulations, and thus academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification. Students demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes through assessment. It is the responsibility of the partner degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation to set and monitor the threshold academic standards. The College has a governance structure that reflects specifically the needs of higher education provision, through which the Learning and Teaching Strategy is implemented. The College complies with its awarding bodies' policies and procedures. It does this by operating an internal Higher Education Course Approval and Development Procedure through which the College's responsibilities towards the policies and procedures for each awarding partner are clearly identified. The policies and procedures of the College therefore allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.25 The review team tested the Expectation in discussions with staff and students, and reading the minutes and papers of meetings that staff and students attend. The review team scrutinised the documentation provided, met staff, students, and teaching staff and external stakeholders. The review team further investigated the assessment of learning outcomes and finds that Derby College takes ownership of the academic standards of its higher education programmes.

1.26 The team finds evidence that the College follows the policies and practices of the awarding bodies and organisation in the use of external examiners and verifiers. Pearson HNC/D Boards are all coordinated to run at the same time to ensure that external representation can be there and decisions are consistent, and this is coordinated across the PRRD group. All other exam boards are set up by degree-awarding body partners to ensure that, if franchised, all partners and externals are there, and, if validated, relevant faculty and externals can be there. Details of when exam boards run are now held centrally and managers attend exam boards. Outcomes of exam boards are considered at both AQSC and HE Academic Board.

1.27 External examiners are always invited to exam boards, and their commentary is also reported to the HE Academic Board and actions are recorded on the MELD system. The College's internal course approvals' process was reviewed and the process through which proposals are signed off by HE Academic Board demonstrates that the policies, procedures and practices with regard to securing academic standards, and the outcomes based approach to academic awards, are aligned to Chapter A3 of the Quality Code.

1.28 The restructured committees enable the College to track action points that might previously have been missed. Standards and quality assurance are specifically considered in meetings with link tutors, as frequently as fortnightly, during which developmental matters might also be considered. All such activity is reported through the HE Academic Board.

1.29 Academic standards provided by the awarding body and organisation for all awards are set and monitored by senior managers, recorded through the MELD management system, for actioning by the key College staff member. The College has identified an internal course approvals' process through which proposals are signed off by HE Academic Board, and the outcomes of validations are reported to the Board. The evidence from external examiner reports and Standards Verifier reports is positive. The review team regards the reports as fit for purpose; all were completed appropriately enabling examiners to discharge their responsibilities.

1.30 Students report that the College informs all students of the level of academic literacy and academic gradient present in their courses and of academic standards, contained in the course handbooks.

1.31 The review team consequently found that the monitoring and review of alignment with UK threshold academic standards and awarding partners' own standards are effectively maintained through the application of the AMR. The operation of this process is comprehensively recorded for actions through the MELD system, and is rigorously monitored by senior staff. Link tutors are regularly in touch to maintain the operation of the awards, in addition to high-level discussion of standards which is also fed into the HE Academic Board.

1.32 Students are well supported in their studies benefiting particularly from the College's close links with employers. To enhance this work the Director of Employer Engagement, Team Leaders for Business Development, the International Manager and the Higher Education Manager meet monthly to develop the promotion strategy and use employers to input into curriculum. Feedback from employers is used in developing programmes, and by using labour market intelligence (LMI) from organisations such as the Local Enterprise partnership (LEP), UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), and sector skills councils to ensure that the provision provides clear lines of sight to improved employment for students on the programme. This process was scrutinised by the review team, and the engagement of the LEP, local employers, and degree-awarding bodies identified a strong and collaborative relationship.

1.33 Employers are used to support professional development, working with the College to improve the performance and professional potential of students. The College has also undertaken a survey of higher education employers although full results are yet to be available. Employers are able to update College staff on the latest developments within industry and were able to explain to the review team how they contribute to the programme reviews. An example has been modification to the Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering and the development of a hydraulics module by the College, with input from JCB. This modification is deemed to be a positive contribution following the communication from the College, link tutor of Sheffield Hallam University and the employers. The rigorous, comprehensive and inclusive internal programme design, approval, monitoring and

modification processes, which enable the College to design programmes to meet the needs of learners and local, regional and national employers, is **good practice**.

1.34 The College's actions are in accordance with their own and their awarding partners' academic frameworks and regulations, are rigorously applied and reported through an appropriate governance structure that engages staff at all levels, and is supported by external stakeholders. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The rigorous implementation of the processes by senior managers, the ownership of these by each level of the College staff, and the understanding of the processes by students and external stakeholders, means 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

1.35 The College's awarding bodies and organisation are ultimately responsible for ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and that the maintenance of UK threshold academic standards have been satisfied. The College details how each awarding body runs an assessment board for each programme, attended by College staff. For Pearson programmes there is a College-wide exam board, the minutes of which are reported into HE Academic Board.

1.36 The University of Derby learning outcomes and formative assessment information are contained within module specifications. These have been scrutinised at validation to ensure that the assessment activity matches the credit value of the unit and is in keeping with the rest of the University's framework. Sheffield Hallam University requires similar levels of scrutiny at validation and requires discussion about both formative and summative assessment strategies. Nottingham Trent University particularly requires discussion about both formative and summative assessment strategies. Finally, Pearson provides Standards Verifiers for programmes who are specifically asked whether assignments are fit for purpose. Standard Verifiers are able to review sample assignments (published nationally) for course teams to consider in seeking to achieve equivalence of standards.

1.37 All programmes have an assessment strategy which are detailed in module templates and programme specifications. All programmes have a transparent marking process, and assessments are internally verified or moderated.

1.38 External examiners confirm that the standards set are being maintained and are comparable to similar programmes run by other providers, reviewing proposed summative assessments and seeing the work that is produced, is moderated, internally verified or second-marked depending on the awarding body or organisation.

1.39 The policies and procedures of the College therefore allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.40 The review team has tested this Expectation through scrutinising the documentation provided, and meeting staff, students and external stakeholders.

1.41 The College is proactive in ensuring academic standards are maintained for all assessments and these are designed in collaboration with its awarding partners. The close relationship between the College and its awarding bodies is relied upon to ensure new assessments achieve the required standard. External examiners confirm the maintenance of these academic standards, reported through the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and HE Academic Board, and monitored by senior managers.

1.42 The College's awarding bodies maintain both formal and informal relationships with the College. The spacing and quality of assessments is discussed at the HE Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC), and there have been discussions about formative assessment strategies. This work will be taken forward by the new HE Teaching and Learning Coach once appointed. The review team considers these interactions between awarding bodies and the College proved very well established and clearly structured, including peer observation, supporting induction, moderation events, programme committees, exam board, and a development day at the end of the academic year.

1.43 Reflecting on the potential changes in funding, and awarding bodies' maintenance of academic standards, the College is employing more rigorous processes for the approval of Pearson programmes and for periodic review by incorporating externality into the process. The College has, together with the examination boards and processes of awarding bodies, established an internal formal examination board for Pearson programmes to enhance the assurance of academic standards and introduced staff from the regional college network into Pearson examination boards in order to provide externality (A3.2).

In the academic year, all work is either moderated or internally verified (depending on the awarding body or organisation terminology) and standardisation meetings take place for all courses. In franchised programmes this is done at a moderation event to gain a sense of parity within the course as well as against national benchmarks. There is an internal verification system for assignment setting on Pearson programmes plus an external Standards Verifier, while assignments go through external examiners for awarding body provision. For Pearson programmes the Standards Verifier is not required to attend the exam boards and rarely does. There is therefore no externality at Pearson exam boards. The College has made an arrangement whereby a member of staff from another of the regional network of colleges attends these exam boards. The introduction into Pearson examination boards of staff from the regional college network in order to provide externality is **good practice**.

1.44 Link tutors provide a pivotal role in helping to ensure assessment practices are in line with both awarding body and national standards. The support the College offers its link tutors liaising with the awarding bodies was clearly evident in meetings with the review team, noting for example fortnightly meetings with the College to support engineering courses. The strength of the relationships and familiarity of colleagues demonstrated the College maintains very strong links with its awarding bodies.

1.45 Students report that the College had explained the expected standards students would be required to achieve academically through research and written assessment. Students were able to confirm in meetings that the standards required were clearly explained in tutorials, and that there was easily available academic support from the College in order to achieve them.

1.46 The College's actions are in accordance with their own and their degree-awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's academic frameworks and regulations. Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met. The rigorous implementation of the processes by senior managers, the ownership of these by each level of the College staff, and the understanding of the processes by students and external stakeholders, means the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.47 The College has identified a clear process for the monitoring and review of programmes which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained. This process includes annual monitoring that involves all programmes, and all annual monitoring is considered by the AQSC. This process contributes to AMRs, and identifies emergent themes to be built into action plans.

1.48 The College produces an institutional higher education self-evaluation document (SED) using annual monitoring reports. The College describes AMRs emergent for Academic Year 2014-15 based on the purchase of the MELD software to facilitate central action planning and tracking to ensure completion of all tasks identified. Additionally the revised higher education governance structures lend themselves to discussing annual monitoring more fully in committees.

1.49 The College's awarding bodies all have annual monitoring processes. Course teams produce annual monitoring reports which go to the awarding bodies for comment and these reports are reviewed and approved by the AQSC prior to submission to the awarding partner. The College, through the AQSC, identifies disparities with the standards of AMRs and require them to be re-drafted if they are not of an appropriate standard. The policies and procedures of the College allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.50 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutinising the documentation provided, meeting senior staff, students, and academic staff and external stakeholders.

1.51 The review team found evidence that the College follows the policies and practices of the awarding bodies in the use of external examiners and verifiers. External examiners are always invited to exam boards, and their commentary is also reported to the HE Academic Board. The evidence from external examiner and Standards Verifier reports is positive. The review team regards the reports as fit for purpose; all were completed appropriately, enabling examiners to discharge their responsibilities.

1.52 In the past academic year, the College has undertaken approval and re-approval events with its awarding bodies. These were the Collaborative Periodic Review from Sheffield Hallam University, and Institutional Re-Approval from Nottingham Trent University in readiness for moving from a franchise to a validated model.

1.53 The 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 awarding body are being maintained. The College has its own well developed and implemented system for programme review and adheres to the requirements of its awarding partners. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.3 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

1.54 The College states that it is responsible for maintaining academic standards on its programmes in accordance with the standards set by its awarding partners through their academic frameworks and regulations. The awarding bodies have a clear process for monitoring academic provision, assessment of learning outcomes and alignment with UK academic standards.

1.55 The College places reliance primarily on external examiners and Standards Verifiers in the case of Pearson programmes who are appointed by the awarding partners. External examiners review proposed assessments, verify grades and confirm standards. External examiner reports are discussed by programme leaders and link tutors and a formal response is submitted. Standards Verifiers make an annual visit to review assessment work, resources and gain feedback from students before submitting a report. Report responses and actions are collated by the Quality Manager (HE Remit) who presents to the AQSC a summary of areas for improvement and good practice. A subsequent action plan is produced and monitored by the ASQC. External examiners also attend exam boards and the College involves members of the PRRD group to attend Higher National exam boards held at the College to provide externality. The College currently works with two professional and regulatory bodies, the Chartered Institute of Building and the Institution of Engineering Technology (IET). IET approval was verbally confirmed during the review visit. The review team considers that the College's policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

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

1.57 External examiners and Standards Verifiers are appointed by the awarding bodies and Pearson in accordance with their guidelines. External examiner reports confirm the alignment with academic standards and the assessment of learning outcomes. External examiners are also present at Examination Boards. External examiner responses and reports are discussed with link tutors and action points are collated by the Quality Manager and reported at the AQSC. The MELD system ensures that action points are acted on in appropriate time and this system is accessed by staff right up to the senior level.

1.58 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and, due to the well established policies and procedures that are in place, 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 other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

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

1.60 All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. There were no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. There are three areas of good practice in Sections A2.1, A3.1 and A3.2. These involve the academic governance structure which empowers staff at all levels to develop deliver and enhance provision (A2.1); the rigorous and comprehensive internal programme design and approval system which enables the College to design programmes to meet the needs of students and employers (A3.1); and the introduction into Pearson examination boards of staff from the regional college network in order to provide externality (A3.2).

1.61 The review team notes that the primary responsibility for much of this judgement area lies not with the College but with its awarding bodies and organisation. The College has good relationships with its awarding partners and responds appropriately to their requirements. The College has internal policies and systems to ensure that it can meet the requirements of the awarding partners, and systems are effectively implemented. The College has good policies and processes to maintain academic standards, and staff and students have a clear understanding of standards.

1.62 The review team concludes that the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered by the College on behalf of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 The design and approval of programmes is the responsibility of awarding body and organisation. The College has excellent relationships with each awarding body, sharing a commitment to make programme development work for all parties. All awarding body programmes undertake periodic review that has incorporated developmental input from a variety of stakeholders including students, employers and key organisations relevant to the College and regional economy.

2.2 There is a clear process for programme approval for both validated and franchised arrangements, including evidence of recent successful validation events' outcomes. The College identifies the strategic aim to move all Higher National provision to validated or franchised through its awarding bodies, owing to potential changes in funding, and the rigour offered by its degree-awarding partners in terms of processes for maintaining academic standards. Strategically, the College is actively pursuing PSRB approval/accreditation for its award provision.

2.3 The College has identified the responsibilities and has clear processes and policies in place which follows the guidelines and regulations of the awarding bodies and organisation. The policies and procedures of the College allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.4 The review team has tested this Expectation through scrutinising the documentation provided by the College and analysing its strategic approach, meeting senior staff, students, academic staff and external stakeholders and employers. The review team scrutinised the College's VLE and MELD system of quality assurance action management to ascertain its contribution to the process of award approval. The review team tested the maintenance of academic standards, and the enhancement of learning outcomes particularly with teaching staff, degree-awarding body representatives and students on a variety of awards. The team explored the engagement the students with the annual monitoring and review system, and was able to establish their active engagement. Likewise, the review team explored the engagement and understanding of the action planning for AMR, articulated through the College's MELD system in which all levels of the College's higher education staff are engaged.

2.5 The College does not have degree-awarding powers, but was able to demonstrate the clear process for programme approval of both franchised and validated provision. The review team heard evidence that the purpose and nature of programme design was to ensure that changes in curriculum are based around industry standards and acquiring and developing skills in order to demonstrate key employability expertise. Feedback from employers is used in developing programmes, and by using labour market intelligence (LMI) from organisations such as the Local Enterprise partnership (LEP), UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), sector skills councils and others to ensure that the provision provides clear lines of sight to improved employment for students on the

programme. This process was scrutinised by the review team, and the engagement of the LEP, local employers, and degree-awarding bodies identified a strong and collaborative relationship. The review team heard from all degree-awarding bodies of their external examiners' confidence in the maintenance of academic standards on the College's programmes. This rigorous and comprehensive internal design, approval, monitoring and modification process is identified as good practice in Expectation A3.1.

2.6 The review team heard from senior staff and teaching staff that the revised governance and committee structure for higher education programmes now offers a separate identity within the College, and offers an improved management structure, transparent programme management, and opportunities to share higher education initiatives. The review team heard from the awarding bodies, teaching staff and students that the design, development and approval of programmes is inclusive, efficient and fit for purpose. The College is about to create a higher education-specific employment and skills board, agreed at the HE Academic Board that is expected to strengthen this strategic approach.

2.7 Three programmes have successfully been through validation with degree-awarding bodies in the past academic year. The new programme specifications have been made available through the VLE. The College also reported the verbal confirmation of IET approval for its engineering awards.

2.8 Reflecting on the potential changes in funding, and degree-awarding bodies' maintenance of academic standards, the College is employing more rigorous processes for the approval of Pearson programmes and for periodic review by incorporating externality into the process. The review team heard how the key strategic relationship with the University of Derby means there are increasing offers of full-time pre-service routes, and part-time in-service routes such as the Foundation Degree Children and Young Peoples' Services, and teacher training programmes. The College recognises the opportunity strategically to plan Access provision and higher education provision across the city and county through an agreed business planning process.

2.9 The College's Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) procedure demonstrates input from students on programme design and delivery. For example Action Planning for teacher training was identified as a result of discussions at the Programme Committee meetings, through which major and minor modifications have been put forward.

2.10 The review team concludes that the College operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes and that Expectation B1 is met. The process is clearly understood by College staff, and is rigorously applied. The relationship with all the College's partners is well established, staff are regularly in communication with the College's link tutors, other teaching staff, senior managers and the awarding bodies. The review team therefore concludes that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.11 The College has progressed in improving the student admission process for consistency and growth of the higher education provision. Policies and procedures have been reviewed to ensure they follow the Expectation as well as the awarding bodies' regulations. Some of the improvement activities the College has undertaken have included appointing a Learner Services Adviser for HE to manage the process of admissions onto higher education programmes as well as the College joining a regional widening participation network.

2.12 All policies and processes are inclusive and consistent for both part-time and full-time students regardless of application route (UCAS or direct), which includes writing a 4,000 character personal statement for all higher education programmes at the College. Entry requirements are determined by the awarding bodies, but alternative assessments are available for students who do not have the entry requirements. Programme leaders, when compiling the annual monitoring forms, also review their retention and recruitment with a formalised action plan.

2.13 As part of the published information approval process, the information sent out to applicants is scrutinised by the AQSC and verified by the awarding bodies, to ensure it is accurate, clear and accessible. Previously, inaccurate information was sent out by programme staff, which is why the College has reviewed this and is now the responsibility of the HE Learner Services Adviser as a central service.

2.14 The College has identified the responsibilities and has clear processes and policies in place which follow the guidelines and regulations of the awarding bodies. This allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.15 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing the policies and procedures of admissions, the prospectus and information sent to applicants, the current and proposed website, annual monitoring reviews, and action plans, student submissions, pro formas for interviews, minutes from meetings discussing recruitment, admissions and enrolment, the regional network terms of reference and minutes, student feedback and the destination data of higher education leavers (DLHE). The team also held meetings with the senior management team, academic teaching staff, support staff and students from both full and part-time higher education programmes.

2.16 Course teams are involved within the recruitment stage by joining the interview panel to discuss the expectations of the programme within the workplace. Some programmes, such as the Foundation Degree Integrated Engineering programme, invite employers onto the panel. All students have to complete a 4,000 character personal statement which is part of the published information approval procedure. The personal statement is used as a discussion point in the interview with the student, and staff follow the higher education interview pro forma which offers guidance to ensure the student is on the right programme for them, subject to the awarding body's final approval. Students who may not have the traditional qualifications for the entry requirements can have alternative assessments as part of the interview process. If the College finds the student is not suitable

for the programme, they are given feedback on their application and offered guidance by the support team. If a student wishes to appeal against this, they can be referred to the Appeals and Complaints procedure.

2.17 The information sent to applicants and stakeholders, both electronically and in hard copies, is accurate, clear and accessible. Previously, the College found there were inconsistencies with information being provided for applicants which had caused some confusion for students on arrival last academic year. However, the College has since structured Learner Services so that there is a specific adviser for higher education who oversees the admission process and produces accurate information centrally for all programmes. The progression activities and communication for further education students to progress onto higher education programmes made available at the College were indicated as a positive attribute, and students felt they were aware of the expectations of the programmes before progressing onto them. The team therefore **affirms** the introduction of the HE Learning Services Advisor role to standardise the higher education admissions' process and support internal progression from further education provision.

2.18 Students praised the level of information they received at the beginning of their student journey, such as information for Disability Student Allowance (DSA) and Student Finance with their letter following their applications. This has been implemented by the support staff who include this within the admissions process, especially as applying for DSA is a lengthy process and the students can apply for this in advance should they require it.

2.19 Students find the admissions and enrolment process clear and informative, and have a positive experience. The College ensures that it captures student feedback at key points of the academic year and works to improve any issues raised by students through the Learner Voice route, including the admissions, enrolment and induction processes.

2.20 The College has joined a regional network to widen participation within the area and promote the higher education programmes. It was evident in the minutes of these meetings and the meetings with teaching staff and support staff that this had a positive impact and staff are able to identify how the College can widen participation. This was also reflected in the student meetings about why they chose to come to the College.

2.21 The College has effective processes and practices for recruitment, admissions and enrolment, which are reviewed and further developed to heighten the stakeholders' experience. Therefore the review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B2 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

2.22 The College states that it is making good progress with enhancing teaching and learning by establishing a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy and the proposed appointment of a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Coach. The restructure of governance by the College to give an increased focus for higher education and integrate this through all levels of staff has enabled a number of positive developments as set out below and this leads to the good practice in Expectation A2.1.

2.23 The College has a well defined Higher Education Teaching and Learning strategy that is aligned with the Quality Code. It also contains a grading system for teaching observations for higher education, which was further developed by the adoption of a new teaching observation process in 2014-15 following discussions with higher education partners and the Higher Education Academy. The College also established LTEC to explore issues of teaching and learning and related continuing professional development (CPD). This has led to a range of CPD activities including work with the University of Derby on assessment. The policies and practices of the College allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.24 The review team tested the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the engagement of students in learning by scrutiny of the range of evidence supplied and meeting staff, students and student support teams.

2.25 The development of the teaching and learning strategy and observation system with subsequent, related CPD has had a positive impact. The College has joined the Higher Education Academy and expects to have six staff gaining fellowship and one gaining senior fellowship this year. The College was heavily involved in the development of scholarly activity and featured in the Journal for Higher Education in July 2014. This work has been done through the College's PRRD. The positive work has led to the PRRD gaining catalyst funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Association of Colleges to run a national pilot on developing scholarly work in college-based higher education for the next three years.

2.26 To ensure enhancement and review of teaching and learning opportunities the graded observation system ensures that those who receive a grade three or four in an observation are re-observed within four to six weeks, having been given additional support. Examples of teaching observations indicate a standardised and comprehensive system of teaching observation and re-observation. Teaching observation grades are also considered in staff annual performance reviews. The College has robust processes to ensure the quality of higher education staff. The awarding partners approve staff teaching on their programmes through scrutiny of staff CVs and industry experience. Higher education has been built into the staff induction process and all new staff have weekly coaching and mentoring for the first few weeks.

2.27 The College has been further developing higher education on the VLE and students have access to plagiarism-detection software to check their work prior to submission.

Student focus groups show good levels of engagement with the VLE. The College supports innovation in teaching and learning and this has resulted in work being developed in tablet technology and a showcase of student work. The VLE is also used to support the online Higher National Certificate programme in Construction and the Built Environment with extra software to enhance the student experience.

2.28 In 2013-14 the College established closer links between the higher education teams and the Inclusion and Support Team to further develop promotion of DSA and encourage earlier testing of students to allow support from the start of their course. The College has also appointed a Higher Education Study Coach to offer one-to-one support and study skills' workshops.

2.29 The College monitors the quality of teaching and learning via module feedback from students, meetings with employers and discussion at programme meetings. This then informs annual monitoring reviews and CPD plans and the results form part of the Quality Improvement Plan. Students have a variety of feedback mechanisms including feedback within sessions, via email and online student surveys and face-to-face. Students feel that their feedback enables improvements to their course and in general they feel positive about their engagement with the courses and the standard of teaching. Students indicated that staff are up-to-date with their topic areas and are helpful.

2.30 Examples of student module feedback show that the process is in place and effective and the module teacher responds to the areas of concern. The College is working to further improve the feedback loop to students as part of this module feedback process. The College also has a system of 'Team Time' to complement CPD where higher education teams have time each week to work together on issues associated with teaching and learning. The new higher education fees policy has identified time for teams to undertake scholarly activity as a response from concerns raised at the LTEC. The investment in, and comprehensive support for, higher education-specific staff professional development, which enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices is **good practice**.

2.31 The review team concludes that the well defined and developed methods of teaching observations, staff development and scholarly activity together with integrated student support means that the College meets Expectation B3 and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.32 The College states that it has a clear committee structure responsible for monitoring and evaluating the way in which students reach their potential. This has been greatly aided by the restructure of governance with an integrated focus on higher education which leads to the good practice in Expectation A2.1. The formation of the AQSC has brought together managers from curriculum and support services and has improved links with the library. This has worked well with the appointment of the new Higher Education Study Coach and the establishment of a library higher education coordinator.

2.33 The College has spent time in planning and developing resources for higher education. At the start of the academic year there was a meeting to explore resource needs. Following this all course teams met the Library Services' Coordinator resulting in improved library resources for higher education. The Higher Education Study Coach is developing a set of workshops and associated materials to broaden student study skills for the coming academic year. The College is also developing three new research and teaching spaces at Broomfield Hall to meet demands of growing provision. The policies and procedures adopted by the College allow this Expectation to be met in theory.

2.34 The review team tested student development and achievement through the analysis of the College's strategic approach and through meetings with staff, students and employers and scrutiny of the evidence provided.

2.35 Together with planning resources the College prepares students for higher education study before they arrive. Students are sent information about the DSA to ensure that this is in place and the Inclusion and Support Team have appointed a higher education link.

2.36 Students undergo a curriculum and College induction which includes library induction, VLE and IT. Most courses also have a 'starting to study' element to support the transition into higher education. For example in Children's and Young People's Services there is a range of modules on starting to study, and in teacher training there is a range of referencing and introduction study modules. Student academic potential is further developed through the new Higher Education Study Coach and through sessions on personal development plans and academic writing skills. Students can also access pastoral support which is signposted in the course handbooks and on the VLE. They also have a main tutor (programme leader) to discuss their progress.

2.37 Students are encouraged to take part in a range of projects, community activity and conferences to support their professional development. The College is planning to enhance this aspect and is engaged in developing a range of longer-term metric reports to understand the impact of higher level study on graduates.

2.38 Many students are employed and employers are involved in the design of curriculum and revalidation. Employers are also used to support professional development, and work with the College to improve the performance and professional potential of students. Meeting employers established that they have regular contact with the College and that employers and the College work closely together for the benefit and development of the student. Employers are able to inform College staff about the latest

developments within industry and, in the case of JCB, have worked in partnership with the College to develop a special hydraulics unit for the Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering. The extensive links with industry which ensure the currency of provision and enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.39 To enhance this work the Director of Employer Engagement, Team Leaders for Business Development, the International Manager and the Higher Education Manager meet monthly to develop the promotion strategy and use employers to contribute to the curriculum. The College has also undertaken a survey of higher education employers, although full results are yet to be available.

2.40 The College maintains positive relations with its awarding bodies and organisation to record the academic, professional and personal progress of students and is piloting the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) in conjunction with the University of Derby.

2.41 To develop the College's Higher Education Strategy relating to widening participation, the Higher Education Manager has joined the Association of Colleges (AoC) Advisory Group on widening participation and the College has also joined the North East Midlands Collaborative Outreach Network (NEMCON) to promote vocational higher education in the sub-region.

2.42 Students are well supported in their studies and have study rooms available for higher education student use. Students know how to access online resources and benefit particularly from the College's close links with employers. The review team concludes that the College's strategy and strategic approach and the close relationships with employers together with the engagement of students in their professional development enables Expectation B4 to be met. The associated level of risk is 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

2.43 The College has been working on creating a contextualised Higher Education Learner Voice and further developing student engagement across all areas of the College. The College and the student body are active in gathering feedback and ensuring students are also partners with the College in their teaching and learning experience. The role of the Students' Union and the Learner Voice Champion assist the processes in place for the Learner Voice, which includes all part and full-time students.

2.44 The College has in place the HE Learner Voice Procedure and Policy which formalises the route of student engagement and feedback throughout the governance structure at the College. There have been changes in the Learner Voice process to refine the HE Student Forum to achieve more plurality for all higher education students, following an event that representatives of the College attended which was based on defining student engagement. In addition, the Student Charter has been drafted with input from student representatives and staff. Information on the Learner Voice is available both within handbooks and the VLE for students to access.

2.45 To gather feedback, the College has developed higher education-specific surveys, which creates inclusive feedback from all higher education students at the College, such as an NSS-styled survey as part-time students are outside the scope for the official NSS (National Student Survey). This has been followed up by focus group meetings with students and closing the feedback loop with the 'You Said, We Did' on the VLE. Students also complete module feedbacks, the results of which are communicated to programme committees. All feedback that requires improvements and changes are also entered onto the MELD for transparency and monitoring of development based on the Learner Voice. The policies and responsibilities identified for all levels of student engagement at the College allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.46 To test the Expectation, the team reviewed the Learner Voice Process and Policy, the student written submission, annual monitoring reviews and action plans, module feedbacks, the VLE, You Said We Did, Surveys, HE Learner Forum minutes, job description of the Learner Voice Champion, impact report of the Students' Union, programme committees minutes, draft student charter and student handbooks. The team also met senior teams, academic staff, support staff and students from part and full-time programmes, including student representatives at the College.

2.47 As the HE Learner Voice Procedure has been refined following review of the process at the recent student engagement event, students elect student representatives and the College provides training for them. Last academic year, attendance was low but this was due to student availability. The College contacted student representatives and discussed their roles. The College and the Students' Union will both be working in collaboration to develop sessions that are accessible to all student representatives in the future. Students confirmed to the team that they were aware who their student representatives are and are able to approach them, as well as the Learner Voice Champion should an issue arise. Derby College Students' Union is engaged with higher education students as well as further education students, as evidenced within their impact report and calendar of events, and are reviewing the possibility of having a dedicated higher education position within the Students' Union. The student representation structure is clear, as well as informing students of up-to-

date information from the National Union of Students. The College also has student ambassadors who promote and engage with the College events such as open days, but do not perform in the same capacity as the student representatives.

2.48 The team found evidence that student engagement for provision that has a higher proportion of part-time and distance learners, is effective. With the work done for the reformed HE Learner Voice process, there is inclusive practice for all learners to be able to engage within their teaching and learning, and contribute as partners. Students feel they can also approach staff confidently to give feedback. This is discussed at the programme committee and student representatives, if available to attend, have the opportunity to provide feedback. If they cannot attend, students provide feedback in various mechanisms such as the surveys and emails. They are provided with feedback about the actions.

2.49 This feedback has led to informed conversations and a number of projects. An example of this is the capital development for higher education provision within the College about which students have given feedback on their learning spaces and resources. Module feedback, both formal and informal, is a requirement of the awarding bodies and the College uses feedback forms which are discussed at both the programme committees and AQSC. Students also have the opportunity to feed back on resources for the programmes, which has resulted in actions to address shortages in specialist equipment and providing higher education specific study spaces.

2.50 All feedback and comments raised by students via the Learner Voice Procedure or informally are recorded onto MELD with a realistic time frame of when action should take place. The College produces the 'You Said, We Did' as a way of closing the feedback loop and informing students of the actions of their contributions. In addition, the College has developed higher education specific surveys to gather inclusive feedback from all higher education students. Such examples are the HE Induction Survey and the HE Programme Survey. The Induction survey not only gathers feedback from students but introduces the higher education committee structures, while the Programme Survey mirrors the NSS survey but is available for all higher education students to complete, while the NSS applies only to a small proportion of full-time students but does not apply to the part-time and distance learners. These are also followed-up with focus group meetings organised by the Learner Voice Champion who reports these back to the AQSC.

2.51 The review team found this overall process in gathering feedback on programmes to be highly effective in practice, particularly in gathering feedback from part-time and distance-learning students. The contextualised higher education learner voice process which is inclusive of all students is **good practice**. The gathering of the learner voice and feedback from students and other stakeholders is also used effectively in the design approval, monitoring and modification of programmes and this leads to the good practice in Expectation A3.1.

2.52 The review team finds evidence to show the College is proactive and inclusive in ensuring that students are partners in their teaching and learning experience and their contributions are valued. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B5 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

2.53 The College states in its SED that it operates a clear range of policies and practices expected by its awarding partners in the assessment of students. The College has not operated recognition of prior learning (RPL) directly as an element of exemption from student assessment; rather, all such applications are dealt with by the degree-awarding bodies which sign off any RPL. For Pearson programmes a similar system has been developed, which involves final approval from the Standards Verifier. The College identifies the range of assessments, both formative and summative, and these are supported within its assessment regulations. The system is operated in a robust way which incorporates external examiner procedures, the operation of an Academic Misconduct and Malpractice Policy and the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

2.54 The College's approach to the assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.55 The review team tested the assessment of students and recognition of prior learning through scrutinising the College's strategic approach in documentation provided, and through meetings with senior staff, students, academic staff and employers. The review team also met support staff to explore supplementary aspects of the student experience that will enable the achievement of learning outcomes within their qualifications.

2.56 The College uses formative and summative assessments in all awards, and maintains a focus on initial planning assessment that also includes work-based assessment modes. The College focuses on identifying students' starting-points and encourages assessment activity to be designed to stretch the student.

2.57 All work is either moderated or internally verified (depending on the awarding body or organisation terminology) and standardisation meetings take place for all courses. In franchised programmes this is done at a moderation event to gain a sense of parity within the course as well as against national benchmarks. There is an internal verification system for assignment-setting on Pearson programmes, plus an external Standards Verifier, while assignments go through external examiners for awarding body provision.

2.58 The College demonstrated valid and reliable processes of assessment in franchised and validated programmes, confirmed and supported by its awarding bodies. The College operates a range of assessments within the regulations, policies and practices of its awarding bodies and organisation. The College's focus on individual student success, with necessary academic support, is a key indicator of an effective suite of policies and procedures. Minutes of the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee identify that curriculum teams want to share best practice, and the appointment of the HE Teaching and Learning Coach will help in this respect as they will be able to develop formative assessment strategies with teams and share best practice. The assessment process is shown to work effectively in practice. This includes confidence in College staff moderating work, as described by College's awarding bodies and organisation.

2.59 The review team heard from support staff that, as part of the recruitment and admissions' procedures, students are advised of additional support that may be available for their studies. The team heard that the College seeks to have candidates assessed for specific learning needs, if possible, prior to starting their studies, and establishing learning contracts with practical support as early in the individual student's studies as possible. The College has put in place processes designed to support student independence in achieving assessments. The review team heard from students that summative assessments are supported by the College providing additional learning support for graduate attributes. The review team heard that students needing additional study support were identified, and provision was consistently delivered throughout their study. Students also confirmed that formative assessments offered timely and useful feedback to support formal assessment.

2.60 Students report satisfaction with the quality of teaching and support offered to learners through assessment, including preparation for the task, and the quality and qualifications of teaching staff. Students also noted the academic challenge presented by assignments, and the academic gradient that was clearly present in the student experience. All students reported knowledge of the assignment submission processes, the use of plagiarism-detection software and marking turnaround times.

2.61 The review team heard that students understood at the beginning of any module what were the expectations associated with a module. In addition, students are very clear in their understanding of what constitutes achievement. The College also ensures work-based mentors are sent an introduction pack, copies of observation reports, a newsletter during the year and they are surveyed so that the College is able to make assessment work better for students.

2.62 The College identified an initiative promoting the use of plagiarism-detection software as an academic tool in the current academic year. The HE Academic Board approved this. Students confirmed their understanding of the College Policy on plagiarism, the Academic Misconduct Policy and penalties that apply.

2.63 The review team established that additional work has also been identified in relation to extenuating circumstances. While defined by its awarding bodies, the College has also defined a more robust process for Pearson programmes. Academic Board Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances Procedure has been approved.

2.64 Students were able to confirm their awareness of the College's processes for complaints and appeals, and were clear about where to find the information both on the College VLE and the associated awarding body website, which is linked from the College's VLE. Students confirmed that there is personal assistance available in the College should a claim for extenuating circumstances need to be made.

2.65 The review team concludes that, in operating an equitable, valid and reliable process of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, to enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought, the College meets Expectation B6. The review team also concludes that the processes are fully understood by students, and supported by the awarding partners, in a system overseen by senior staff. Therefore the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.66 The College in its SED states that it recognises the importance of external examiners in the quality assurance process as set out in its External Examiner Procedure. The introduction by the College of a more robust annual monitoring procedure has added external representation on Higher National Examination Boards, and the whole process is monitored by the AQSC.

2.67 External examiners are appointed by awarding bodies and Standards Verifiers by Pearson. External examiners and Standards Verifiers provide annual reports which are discussed by programme leaders and link tutors who note actions required. The reports are then collated by the Quality Manager (Higher Education Remit) and are presented to the AQSC with a summary of good practice and areas for improvement. An action plan is then produced on the College's MELD action-planning software and team managers are made accountable for ensuring actions are taken. These actions are included in the Annual Monitoring Reviews and encompassed within the Quality Improvement Plan. Progress against the actions is monitored at the AQSC and reported to the HE Academic Board. The College's policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

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

2.69 External examiner reports confirm that standards and levels of attainment are comparable with other UK providers and that appropriate standards are being met. Programme leaders on some of the collaborative provision have noted that external examiners' reports are too generic, applying improvement actions across all provider colleges rather than differentiating between providers. This was raised in the formal response to examiners in an effort to improve action points. Standards Verifier reports for Pearson programmes confirm that standards are being met and that there are no essential actions required.

2.70 External examiner reports are available to students through the College VLE together with explanatory notes and how students can comment on reports. Student representatives are invited to attend Programme Committee meetings at which external examiner reports are discussed. Students state that, for all but three courses, they knew who their external examiner was. Students on all but one course knew that their assignments may be viewed by the external examiner.

2.71 The review team concludes that, in view of the close links with external examiners and verifiers and their inclusion Examination Boards, and the use of the MELD system for any actions to be completed, the College meets Expectation B7 and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.72 The College states that it created and implemented a Higher Education Annual Monitoring Review procedure that includes an AMR template for programme teams to complete to enable a full review to take place and a quality improvement plan (QIP) created to address any areas for improvement. This process is scrutinised by the HE Manager and Quality Manager (HE Remit) and presented to the (AQSC). Management has supported a revised programme of monitoring and review to support the programme leaders in the review of their QIPs and achieve the gathering of feedback and writing of AMR reports.

2.73 To achieve full oversight the HE Manager has completed a HE SED for the last academic year that has drawn upon the AMR/QIPs produced at programme level. This process has been validated by the Vice Principal (Curriculum Strategy and Performance Improvement) and the Governor (HE Remit), as well as external representation.

2.74 Collaborative programmes have established processes in place with programme leaders working alongside link tutors to ensure the programmes delivered remain fit for purpose. This includes the submission and review of AMR forms in accordance with the requirements of each awarding body.

2.75 The College notes that there has been a period of significant change with a number of new processes being implemented. It is anticipated that with the support of the HE Manager and Quality Manager (HE Remit) this area for improvement will become more systematic and evaluative.

2.76 The policies and responsibilities identified for all levels of programme-monitoring and review allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.77 The review team tested programme-monitoring and review by scrutinising the documentation provided, and through meetings with senior staff, students, academic staff and employers. The review team also met support staff to explore supplementary aspects of the student experience that enable the achievement of learning outcomes within their qualifications. The review team reviewed the College's Intranet, including MELD and the VLE which also demonstrated the MELD action-planning system integral to the monitoring of annual monitoring and review.

2.78 The review team heard that the new governance approach to annual monitoring and review has been highly successful in generating action plans, transparency and inclusivity.

2.79 The review team heard that the AMR process is understood by all levels of College staff, who understand the annual cycle of review, the action-planning and reporting, and the management processes that oversee it. The systematic reporting of action-planning and short term initiatives using the MELD system has proved highly effective between senior staff, teaching and support staff.

2.80 Students confirm that they are engaged fully with the programme monitoring and review mechanism both formally and informally. Students describe their positive engagement with the programme monitoring and review mechanisms in all courses, and

frequent opportunities to feedback on course management. Students confirm that they are made aware of learning services available with help and assistance throughout their studies.

2.81 The awarding bodies confirm oversight of their programmes through the feedback mechanisms concerning timetabling, the VLE, course management, and enhancement.

2.82 The commitment to AMR procedures, through the adoption of the MELD software, is identified by the review team as highly effective, and degree-awarding body partners confirm the simplicity of monitoring actions and the input of the student voice in the monitoring process. The awarding bodies also report added structure to discussions with link tutors through the MELD reporting mechanism.

2.83 The rigorous approach to annual monitoring has contributed to the good practice in Expectation A3.1. The rigorous monitoring and action planning enable the College to meet the needs of learners and their key external stakeholders and the deliberate steps taken by the College disseminate good practice and create a higher education community leads the good practice in Enhancement.

2.84 The review team concludes that, based on the integration of the AMR application and reporting mechanism that includes senior management, external stakeholders and significantly the student body, that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.85 The College has an internal policy and procedures for academic appeals and complaints, which is governed by the awarding bodies' regulations. Formal complaints are raised at the College's Curriculum Leadership Group (CCLG) and HE Academic Board, while informal complaints are used as feedback, which are recorded and action is then taken. The Learner Voice Champion and Derby College Students' Union are available to support students independently if the student is making a formal complaint or appeal.

2.86 The College follows the regulations of the awarding partners with complaints and academic appeals and identifies the responsibilities for these. Complaints and appeals can be taken to the appropriate awarding partner if the issue is not resolved within the College. All information provided in the student handbook on academic appeals and student complaints policy and procedures is scrutinised by AQSC and approved by the awarding bodies before publication as part of the Published Information Approval process. Internal formal complaints are raised at CCLG and the HE Academic Board, which has not seen any formal complaints raised to this level in recent years, while informal complaints are used as feedback and recorded onto MELD, as well as being discussed at programme committees. The governance and structure of the complaints and appeals allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.87 The effectiveness of the practices were tested by assessing the information provided to all stakeholders, policies and procedures, VLE and annual monitoring reviews and action plans. The team also discussed this with senior, academic and support staff as well as part and full-time students.

2.88 The College outlines clearly the responsibilities for dealing with academic appeals and student complaints internally and externally with the awarding partners. The information is accessible, clear and accurate for stakeholders to access on the website, VLE and within programme handbooks. This also includes appeals should an applicant be rejected for the programme of their choice.

2.89 Staff at the College are trained in dealing with the appropriate channels of complaints and appeals as part of their CPD. Updates of training is discussed at the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. Students understand the difference between academic appeals and complaints, and highlighted to the team that they were satisfied with the processes. None of the students the team spoke to have needed to use these channels, but they are aware of the information available to them. Students also explained to the team that they feel they can bring an issue to the academic staff and it will be handled appropriately and action is taken quickly. This response is in agreement with the senior management team and support team highlighting that there have been no formal complaints brought to HE Academic Board and CCLG for a number of years, but informal complaints raised within the HE provision is recorded on MELD and resolved.

2.90 The review team concludes that the College's practices and responsibilities are effectively managed and there is clear communication to all stakeholders throughout the College. Therefore, Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.91 The College does not have degree-awarding powers. However there is a requirement that higher education providers arrange the delivery and support of learning by third parties for example within work-based learning and work placements and to ensure that the arrangements are implemented securely and managed effectively.

2.92 The majority of students undertaking programmes at the College are already employed and are sent by employers. There are well established practices for working with employers and students have mentors that support learning in the workplace. Regular communication between the College and employers to discuss student progress is undertaken. This also allows for the College staff to maintain up-to-date knowledge on information and innovations in industry, and for the students to access the latest industry equipment and technology through their employers. The extensive links with industry, which ensure currency and enable student development, leads to the good practice cited in Expectation B4. The large amount of work the College undertakes with employers means that most students undertake some form of study, project or assignment within the workplace. Academic staff have overall responsibility for assessing work but, to make the work meaningful and to support student progression, they place importance on engaging with employers. The College's policies and procedures allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.93 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutiny of evidence provided, meetings with staff, students, employers and link tutors from the awarding bodies.

2.94 The College has well established practices for working with employers as set out in their document Managing Provision with Others which is aligned with aspects of *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code. Mentors support students in their work and there are regular visits from tutors to check on progress. Mentors are also invited to supervisory meeting with tutors. Teams also meet employers monthly to discuss the progress of students being sent on programmes. Higher National Certificate in Construction students are on a distance-learning programme and complete work via the VLE. They are offered tutorials both face-to-face and by telephone. The College has a risk assessment process for workplace learning and regular contact with students means that any issues are picked up quickly. As many of the students come to the College from employment, service level agreements exist with certain employers with regard to health and safety; with others, risk assessment is undertaken as required and the whole process is defined by the College Health and Safety Policy.

2.95 As part of the new HE Strategy, the College's Business Development Team, which is an employer-facing area of the College, meets the Higher Education Manager monthly to explore ways of greater collaboration and synergy with employers. The Business Development Director has joined the HE Academic Board to advise on key parts of curriculum development. The extensive relationships with employers and industry enables the College to keep up-to-date with current practices and developments within the industries and provides a seamless experience for students between work and College. The College has also undertaken employer surveys to evaluate the benefit to their business of having employees attending the College. Full survey results are yet to be available. The effective

management of a wide range of formal and informal partnerships with employers, which secures a high-quality learning experience for all students, is **good practice**.

2.96 The review team concludes that the significant interaction with employers and the positive response from students and employers mean that Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.97 The College has no research students and therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.99 Of the applicable Expectations for this judgement area (the College has no engagement with B11), all were met with a low risk. There are no recommendations for improvement in this judgement area. There is one affirmation located in B2 concerning the introduction of the HE Learning Services Advisor role to standardise admissions and support internal progression. There are four features of good practice, one each in Expectations B3, B4, B5 and B10. Moreover, the good practice in Expectations A2.1, A3.1 and Enhancement are relevant to this judgement area.

2.100 The features of good practice are significant and relate to the support for higher education-specific continuous professional development (B3); the extensive links with industry which ensure the currency of provision (B4); the contextualised higher education learner voice (B5); and the effective management of a wide range of formal and informal partnerships with employers (B10).

2.101 The review team notes that the areas of good practice are significant, across multiple Expectations, cross-College and embedded. In particular they note that the provider has plans to enhance this area further; student engagement in the management of this area is widespread and supported and that managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the provider's strategies and policies in this area.

2.102 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Derby College is **commended**.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides information for all stakeholders, following the guidelines of the awarding bodies, and has processes in place to ensure it provides accurate, reliable and accessible information about the higher education provision. This has included assigning the responsibility to the HE Learner Services Adviser, alongside the Quality Manager (HE Remit), who both ensure central information and correspondence about admissions is accurate before sending to applicants.

3.2 The College ensures that information is within the guidelines of the awarding bodies, and is scrutinised internally before being approved by the awarding bodies. This is overseen by the AQSC which implements and monitors the HE Published Information Approval Process which is ratified by the HE Academic Board.

3.3 For promotional material, this is approved by the Quality Manager (HE Remit) with guidance from the marketing team, Information Technology and Learning (ITL) team and the relevant partnership office from the awarding bodies. For programme information, the LTEC and AQSC review the information before being signed off by the awarding bodies. Previously, AQSC found inconsistencies but have since developed the course sheet exemplar and template which are more effective in checking information. In addition, the College, in conjunction with the awarding bodies, ensure that all information about the programmes, including references to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, accreditation, learning outcomes, academic appeals and complaints procedures, extenuating circumstances and assessment methods, are available and reliable in the programme handbooks, which are available on the VLE and as hard copies on request. The College has a standardised template for Higher National programmes to ensure the level of consistency for information. The handbooks are signed-off by the link tutor from the awarding body of the programme. The design of the information processes allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

3.4 To assess the Expectation, the team reviewed the policies and procedures for information between the College and the awarding bodies, examples of information produced for stakeholders, minutes of committees, the prospectus, VLE, programme handbooks, external examiner reports, the marketing plan, the current and the proposed website, MELD and the higher education intranet used by staff. The team also assessed this through meetings with senior staff, academic staff, support staff, employers and students from both full and part-time programmes including a demonstration of MELD, the website, and the VLE.

3.5 The governance structure and process of signing off information is transparent and scrutinised to ensure accurate and reliable information is provided for all stakeholders. The College is monitoring and reviewing information in accordance with the procedures and policies in place, which includes activities such as progression events and joining the regional network for widening participation.

3.6 The College involves stakeholders, such as students, in focus group meetings to review the information provided to them and to ensure this is fit for purpose. This has included the proposed new website which will be in place by the summer of 2015. The College, through the Quality Manager (HE Remit), also undertakes an audit of the VLE which identifies areas of improvement. One example of this is the layout for students to make it accessible to read, which was recognised by student feedback and implemented by the designated Higher Education senior learning technologist.

3.7 The prospectus, both on the website and in hard copy, is clear and concise. This provides stakeholders access to additional information such as open evenings and student support services. Consistency is maintained by the use of exemplars and templates for the course information sheet. Guidance on information, as well as procedures and policies are provided on the higher education intranet which is available for staff to access. This has been rebranded as the HE Manual.

3.8 The HE Learner Services Adviser was appointed following the College's review on information being provided for applicants. Before this appointment, the programme staff were responsible for sending admission information to the applicants but found inconsistencies that created confusion for the students who came to enrol. Now the process has been reviewed and the HE learner Services Adviser works with the Quality Manager (HE Remit) to ensure accurate information is sent out centrally. With the College's progression activities, this helps the HE Learner Services Adviser manage internal applications for student to progress from further education to higher education. The team recognises that the College have resolved the conflict of information issue and this has led to an affirmation in Expectation B2.

3.9 Students praised the level of information they received at the beginning of their student journey, such as information about the DSA and student finance with their letter following their applications. This has been implemented by the support staff who include this within the admissions process, especially as applying for DSA is a lengthy process and so they feel the students can apply for this in advance should they require it.

3.10 The College is working on closing the feedback loop by creating a page on the VLE of 'You Said, We Did' and make all information, such as External Examiner reports and Programme Reviews, accessible for all students. Students confirmed they knew where to find the information and were satisfied with the level of communication throughout the College.

3.11 Graduates are given information from the College about progression routes such as continuing their studies at their awarding body. In the destination data, students felt unprepared for the next level of progression. Following this feedback, the College will be working with the University of Derby to improve this. In addition, the College has submitted their expression of interest to HEFCE to look at Learning Gain and how the College can further support their graduates.

3.12 The College is making efforts in developing and improving their information and communication, and their processes are effective both theoretically and practically. The team found the information provided by the College about learning opportunities to be accurate, reliable and accessible for all stakeholders and therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation (C) 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 reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.14 Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice primarily located in this area, though the affirmation located in Expectation B2 concerning the introduction of the HE Learning Services Adviser to standardise admissions is also relevant to this judgement area.

3.15 Given that the Expectation is met, the level of risk is low and there are no recommendations, the review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and therefore **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College states that a primary motivation in the student experience across all provision is the enhancement and improvement in the quality of students' learning opportunities. The College reports taking positive deliberative steps to build an ethos of enhancement encapsulated in the new Strategic Plan and governance structures. These steps include seeking continually to improve teaching, learning and assessment and support to raise standards by classroom observations and a higher education grading framework was designed and implemented, drawing on the work of the HEA. Governance mechanisms for improved assessment include the Library Coordinator joining AQSC, and the HE Manager and Quality Manager (HE Remit) meeting degree-awarding bodies when taking up post to discuss opportunities and share ideas.

4.2 The College's restructuring of governance approaches to provide a focus on higher education provision within its operation has provided an opportunity to integrate initiatives from teaching and support staff. Within this recent process, the College remains ambitious, noting that to further enhance programmes there needs to be greater understanding of how studying higher education at the College has improved the life chances of the College alumni. Additionally, the HE Teaching and Learning Strategy brings into line teaching and learning in higher education across the College award portfolio. These initiatives incorporating both policies and procedures of the College allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

4.3 The review team has tested the enhancement of student learning opportunities throughout its scrutiny of documentation provided, and in meetings with the Principal, senior staff, support staff academic staff and awarding partners, students, and employers.

4.4 The review team finds that the comprehensive restructuring of the higher education governance structure in the College has resulted in significant outcomes. The appointment of key management staff to operate this system, offering accountability for action-planning, strategic development of programmes, and renewed inclusivity within committee structures has been well received by all College staff. Significant improvements to identify opportunities for enhancement include the SED. Progress against the Action Plan is reported to HE Academic Board and it is envisaged, with these structures now in place, that more people will get involved with action planning for higher education in the College.

4.5 Teaching and support staff report confidence in this new strategy that has enhanced the higher education approach within the College. The integration of support services, particularly student learning needs, employer engagement, and specific library provision, is also reflected in added confidence of students. Teaching staff have reported that the revised structures have comprehensively renewed the approach to higher education in the College, offering an improved higher education academic community, and opportunities to share best practice and innovation. The revision of the College higher education academic governance structure that has clearly empowered staff has led to the good practice in Expectation A2.1.

4.6 Feedback has been enhanced through a higher education-specific procedure, agreed at institutional level, in order to better understand the experiences of learners.

This has resulted in a rolling Action Plan to be developed and shared with course teams to keep a constant dialogue developing with students.

4.7 The College recognises that students can have the capability to achieve on a programme of study, sometimes with support, which is being embedded into the broader College systems. Therefore the Inclusion and Support team offers in-class and one-to-one support for identified students to help them to reach their potential. Initiatives systematically to support students to become co-producers of their own education through implementing principles in the Learner Voice Policy, Procedure and Guidelines is also cited as a significant enhancement activity.

4.8 Additional links to enhancement have been identified by the College, and include improvement to the estate, and learning opportunities shaped by local priorities and employers. The College further identifies other sections of the College's strategy that are enhancing higher education which include meeting the technological needs of learners with particular focus on the millennial generation and contributing to economic growth and social prosperity.

4.9 Employers identify that students' learning has an immediate and direct impact in the workplace, which is reflected in student feedback to the review team. The team's conclusion is that the enhancement of employability is being effectively implemented and this has led to the good practice in Expectation B10.

4.10 The review team heard that the College is supporting academic staff to pursue personal development through Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, and actively promotes collaborative research opportunities with degree-awarding bodies that has resulted in conference participation. Academic staff report a renewed energy and confidence in the enhancement strategy within the College, which is similarly reflected by support staff. The College investment in higher education-specific staff professional development has led to the good practice in Expectation B3.

4.11 The deliberate steps taken by the College to identify, support and disseminate good practice, and create a higher education community that enhances the students' learning opportunities is **good practice**.

4.12 Consequently, the review team concludes Expectation (Enhancement) is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.14 The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low. There are no recommendations, or affirmations in this judgement area. There is one feature of good practice which is very wide-ranging and concerns the deliberate steps taken by the College to develop a higher education community that enhances the students' learning opportunities. However, three other features of good practice are also relevant to this judgement area. These concern the higher education academic governance structure which empowers staff from all levels of the College (A2.1); the College investment in higher education-specific staff professional development (B3); and the effective management of a wide range of employer partnerships which secure a high quality learning experience for all students (B10).

4.15 The review team notes that the good practice located in this judgement area is significant and encompasses the entire judgement area. Moreover, the review team notes that the good practice in Parts A and B that are relevant to this judgement area are also significant and wide-ranging.

4.16 In addition the review team notes that the provider has plans to enhance this area further, with, for example, the recent introduction of an HE Study Coach; that student engagement in the management of this area is widespread and supported; and that managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the provider's strategies and policies in this area.

4.17 The review team thus concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at Derby College is **commended**.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College states its main reason for the delivery of higher education is to offer vocationally relevant courses which allow students to become more employable. The College strategy is focused on improving the life chances of people and businesses in the community it serves.

5.2 The College has well established practices for working with employers as set out in their document Managing Provision with Others which is aligned with aspects of *B10* of the Quality Code. Mentors support students in their work and there are regular visits from tutors to check on progress. Mentors are also invited to supervisory meeting with tutors. Teams also meet employers, who are sending students on programmes, on a monthly basis to discuss progress.

5.3 Employer engagement is a strong element of the College in higher education. Between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years, there was a 20 per cent increase in the volume of employers with whom higher education teams are engaged. All employers have an account manager and employability is increasingly embedded into the day-to-day practices of higher education at the College.

5.4 The majority of students are employed so their higher education studies are aimed at enhancing employability and to build on their intellectual and social skills. The College has therefore involved employers in development and validation of programmes. To build on this, the College's Business Development Team, which is an employer-facing area of the College, meets the Higher Education Manager monthly to explore ways of greater collaboration and synergy with employers. In addition, the Business Development Director has joined the higher education Academic Board to advise on key parts of curriculum development. The College has also undertaken employer surveys to evaluate the benefit to their business of having employees attending the College. Full survey results are yet to be available.

5.5 Employers and students are involved in the development and reviews of programmes and are well informed and enthusiastic about the benefits of the College's provision.

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 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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