



Quality Review Visit of Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

April 2018

Key findings

QAA's rounded judgements about Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

The QAA review team formed the following rounded judgements about the higher education provision at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College.

- **There can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable with standards set and achieved in other providers in the UK.**
- **There can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements.**

Areas for development

The review team identified the following **areas for development** that have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure the reliability and/or comparability of academic standards at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College. The review team advises Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College to:

- ensure that external examiner reports are more accessible for students (Quality Code)
- ensure placement providers from each vocation area receive clear and consistent information to make them fully aware of their joint roles and responsibilities prior to placement commencing (Quality Code)
- ensure that the College is able to clearly articulate and effectively monitor its roles and responsibilities in providing strategic oversight of the management of work placements (Quality Code)
- consider the terminology used in public information of the accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) policy to ensure that prospective students with relevant experiences are sufficiently clear on their eligibility to apply (Consumer Protection).

Specified improvements

The review team did not identify any **specified improvements**.

About this review

The review visit took place from 25 to 26 April 2018 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor John Gabriel
- Ms Dorothy McElwee
- Mr Oliver Wannell (student reviewer).

The overall aim of Quality Review Visit is to:

- provide the relevant funding body with an expert judgement about the readiness of a provider to enter, or continue to operate within, the higher education sector.

Quality Review Visit is designed to:

- ensure that the student interest is protected
- provide expert advice to ensure that the reputation of the UK higher education system is protected, including the protection of degree standards
- identify development areas that will help a provider to progress through a developmental period and be considered 'established'.

Each review visit considers a provider's arrangements against relevant aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements, and in particular:

- the reliability of degree standards and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers
- the quality of the student academic experience, including student outcomes where the provider has a track record of delivery of higher education.

About Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (the college) is a large general Further Education College sited in the west of London, occupying four sites, at Ealing Green, Acton, Southall and Hammersmith. Almost all higher education (HE) provision is delivered from the Hammersmith site with a small amount being delivered at Ealing Green campus. The College's vision for higher education is 'to be the leading provider of Technical/ Vocational and Academic education which is sector-relevant, flexible and affordable'.

The College does not have degree awarding powers, so works in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU, the awarding body) and Pearson Education (the awarding organisation) in the delivery of a range of HE programmes. The College's HE provision falling under the remit of the Quality Review Visit comprises six HE programmes, covering Health and Social Care Management, Business Management, Hospitality Management, Graphic Design, Computing and Teacher Training. At the time of the review visit, the College reported that for academic year 2016-17 it had a total of 102 higher education students enrolled.

Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)

1 The College has memoranda of agreement with its awarding body and awarding organisation, and confirms that all agreements are rigorously adhered to, working with its awarding partners in the approval, monitoring and review of its HE provision. There is a robust process to ensure that requirements of its partners are adhered to consistently through the College's committee processes and through the work of the Dean of Higher Education.

2 The awarding body and the awarding organisation retain overall responsibility for the academic standards of their awards and either provide the programme specifications for the College or validate those written by the College. In all cases, there is clear alignment with the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The mapping of qualifications is carried out by the awarding body and the awarding organisation.

3 The College is responsible for delivering the courses to the required standards in ways which are set out in the respective agreements together with the associated policies and procedures. These are designed to ensure that qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level and awarded on the achievement of defined learning outcomes that students demonstrate through assessment.

4 The College has strong links with both the awarding body and the awarding organisation and meets its awarding partners regularly. The mapping of each qualification to the FHEQ is carried out by the awarding partners as part of their approval processes. The awarding body has clear academic regulations that describe the processes relating to the assessment of awards. These are communicated to the College through the awarding body's virtual learning environment (VLE) and the awarding body provides staff development to support College staff. The awarding organisation ensures assessment requirements are explained in course handbooks and unit handbooks.

5 The awarding body sets out the processes for course review and evaluation; this includes key roles and responsibilities at the delivering institution together with the ways in which the outcome of such evaluation should be used. For the awarding organisation provision, the course leaders complete Annual Course Reviews (ACRs) which go to Course Boards and are discussed by the Higher Education Group (HEG).

6 The academic standards of all HND/C courses are managed through the awarding organisation's regulations and communicated through the awarding organisation's website. The academic standards of CCCU courses are managed through their consortium arrangements with the awarding body and communicated through systematic and effective standardisation events throughout the year to ensure parity of experience across the consortium.

7 External examiner reports confirm that assessment judgements are congruent with the requirements of the FHEQ and those viewed by the review team confirm that the use of external reference points is appropriate.

The relevant code of governance: such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) or the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

8 There is a nominated Higher Education Governor who chairs the Quality Task and Finish Group. The review team was advised at the visit that, as a result of reorganisation, the Quality Task and Finish Group had been replaced by the Curriculum Quality and Performance Monitoring Committee, which continues to be chaired by the HE Governor. The minutes of this group/committee are reported to the Governing Body.

9 There is evidence of a Board of Governors meeting devoted to a detailed discussion of the College's self-evaluation document, which refers to academic standards, student complaints, student information and responses to student feedback. There is further evidence from the minutes of the Governing Body confirming discussions of critical success factors, including 'workforce development', 'effectiveness for learning', and learner outcomes data. For its part, the Governing Body has initiated discussions and reports on strategic partnerships, workforce planning (including research and scholarship), a review of over-18 provision, and Information Advice and Guidance for students. This work informs and gives direction to the Senior Leadership Team. Hence, there is a flow of communications to and from the Governing Body with staff, students and external stakeholders that enables the Governing Body to assure itself of both academic standards and the quality of the learning experience.

10 The Governing Body includes independent members, student and staff representatives as well as the Chief Executive, and hence draws on the experience of both students and staff in providing strategic direction and oversight. There is a structure of student representation across the College and the Student Governor attends student representative meetings.

11 There is evidence of an organisational structure and ethos where deliberations and decisions at module and course level are reflected in the self-evaluation and other reports, including new course proposals initiated and developed by staff in consultation with students, which then goes to the Governing Body for consideration. Such arrangements are indicative of a collegial ethos that supports initiatives and solicits a wide range of views from across the organisation.

The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)

12 The College has programme specifications with clear intended learning outcomes for each programme and contributes to the maintenance of these records through annual review. Definitive course information is available online for prospective students and is detailed in the course handbooks, which students receive in hard copy at the beginning of the year and are available digitally on the VLE.

13 The Curriculum Development Group oversees the development of new courses and reports to the Strategic Leadership Team via HEG. The development and approval of new courses follow the awarding partner's validation processes.

14 For the awarding body programmes, the awarding body has responsibility for setting assessments and validates the course in its entirety, including training College staff to deliver assessment. All staff who contribute to these programmes must first qualify as associate tutors. For the awarding organisation programmes, the College has responsibility for setting assessments in direct compliance with the requirements of the awarding

organisation. Unit leaders are responsible for developing appropriate assessments in line with the College assessment strategy, which are ratified by the awarding organisation.

External examiners are appointed and inducted by the awarding partners and the College is responsible for acting on recommendations from the external examiners' reports. External examiner reports are received by Course Boards and feed into the College's annual self-evaluation document. External examiner reports are made available to students on the VLE and students are told where to find them by their tutors at induction. However, students that the review team met were not aware of the reports or where to find them. On viewing the VLE, the review team noted that external examiner reports were not in a prominent place. The review team therefore recommends that the College makes external examiner reports more accessible for students as an **area for development**.

15 The College has shown clear evidence of the mechanisms in place to ensure that placement providers are appropriate for meeting the intended learning outcomes and to assure the College of student welfare during the placement. The College keeps a comprehensive paper trail of this and maintains good contact with the placement provider during the placement. However, information provided to placement providers prior to work placements starting is limited and, based on the evidence submitted and meetings held, the review team concludes that this is insufficient to ensure that students and employers are fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of placement providers. Therefore, the team advises that the College ensures placement providers from each vocation area receive clear and consistent information to make them fully aware of their joint roles and responsibilities prior to the placement commencing as an **area for development**.

16 Furthermore, during the review visit there was confusion over the communication with placement providers prior to placements commencing and, in particular, where the respective roles and responsibilities are articulated. The College was unable to evidence how its roles and responsibilities in respect of managing work placements are made clear to staff, students and employers and how the mechanisms for ensuring effective oversight of work placements are tested and monitored. The review team therefore advises that the College should be able to clearly articulate and effectively monitor its roles and responsibilities in providing strategic oversight of the management of work placements as an **area for development**.

Rounded judgement

17 The academic standards of higher education courses are set by Canterbury Christ Church University (the awarding body) and Pearson Education (the awarding organisation), and managed through appropriate mechanisms. The College, through its adherence to its awarding partners' regulations, its engagement with the FHEQ, the relevant Code of Governance and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education has demonstrated its effectiveness in meeting the baseline regulatory requirements for academic standards.

18 The review team identified three areas for development in this area. The first relates to making external examiner reports more accessible for students on the VLE. The second is to ensure placement providers from each vocation area receive clear and consistent information to make them fully aware of their joint roles and responsibilities prior to placement commencing. The third area for development relates to ensuring the College is able to clearly articulate and effectively monitor its roles and responsibilities in providing strategic oversight of the management of work placements.

19 The review team concludes that there can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable with standards set and achieved in other providers in the UK.

Judgement area: Quality of the student academic experience

The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)

20 The College has a clear and comprehensive admissions policy which is publicised on the website and available to all prospective students. The policy emphasises the importance of widening access to those under-represented in HE and makes explicit the admissions process, selection criteria, the requirement for consistency of evidence in order to make judgements and the appeals process.

21 The College manages student admissions within the frameworks of the awarding partners. While the awarding body has overall responsibility for entry requirements, the College is responsible for student recruitment. The awarding organisation retains overall responsibility of the approval of local arrangements and ensures the College aligns with the BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality.

22 The Student Summary Review refers to enrolment as a positive experience and in meetings with students, the latter described the admissions process as thorough, indicating that tests sometimes formed part of the procedure to ensure that students could cope with the course. Also noted was the College's provision of continuing support after admission where required.

23 The College has a Learning and Teaching Strategy specifically for higher education which is committed to a student-centred pedagogy and supporting employability through independent and critical thinking. It emphasises the importance of learning resources, including library and IT and teaching and support staff, in the strategy.

24 Staff CVs provide evidence of professional experience and higher qualifications, either completed or currently registered. The degree-awarding body's responsibility checklist and Quality Manual refer to its sharing responsibilities in College staffing, including running an associate tutor programme for College staff. The degree-awarding organisation reviews staff CVs through its Quality Management Review, while the College remains responsible for staffing on HND/Cs.

25 The College has developed a Workforce Development Plan. Peer observation process of teaching and staff development are discussed at its HEG. The College has encouraged staff to gain accreditation with the Higher Education Academy and one member of staff has been supported to complete his PhD which he has been able to use in teaching and curriculum development.

26 The Student Summary confirms the quality of teaching and learning resources and student support. Likewise, students spoke positive of the quality of teaching, support and access to learning resources in their meetings with the review team. Library resources are embedded in schemes of work and the management of learning resources is responsive to student feedback. Specifically, in response to the National Student Survey (NSS) feedback and the perceived lack of library resources, the College raised student awareness of e-learning resources and provided Chromebooks for all students. The main purpose of this work was to support students to use online resources, particularly those having difficulties accessing IT hardware. Students reported having difficulties using the Chromebooks initially, but found staff helpful in providing additional support while also acknowledging the role of library staff in help with assignments, academic writing and referencing.

27 The College has developed a Student Engagement Framework which complements the focus on student centred learners in the HE Learning and Teaching Strategy. There is evidence of a systematic approach to student engagement in the documentation and further examples given in meetings with the review team. The self-evaluation document provides evidence of student engagement in curriculum and course issues; for example, graphic design and computing. Likewise, evidence of student feedback on courses is evident from Course Board HNC/D.

28 There are a number of examples of how the College has responded to feedback from the NSS. For instance, a drop in NSS scores was attributed to an intake of students through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process who struggled with their course. As a result, the College tightened up RPL requirements.

29 Student representatives provide an important channel of feedback from course level up to the student representative on the Governing Body, and the training provision for student representatives is an integral part of the student engagement framework. In meetings with the review team, students confirmed the role played by representatives on course boards and gave an example of how student feedback relating to the lack of external visits on a course led to a number of external visits to technology shows and exhibitions being put in place. Students also referred to the use of tutorials to provide feedback on the course, teaching and ideas for improvements as well as online feedback via Google Classroom and termly surveys to capture feedback. Students reported playing a role in the development of a new course in creative design and that their feedback, based on their experience of their current course, was taken into account in the design of the new course.

30 The College works within frameworks for course review and evaluation set by the awarding partners. The degree-awarding body's Quality Manual explains arrangements, roles and responsibilities and likewise the College's processes inform the awarding organisation's annual reviews for quality assurance. The College's ACRs collate data on recruitment and student performance, and include feedback from students and external examiners. The Dean of HE uses ACRs as the basis of the annual institutional self-evaluation document and action plan and this goes to the HEG, Senior Leadership Team and to the Governing Body for scrutiny and assurance. These processes are explained in detail in the Provider Submission and The Quality Process Chart while the Quality Enhancement Plan references actions against the sections and indicators in the Quality Code.

31 Student engagement is an integral part of the monitoring process from unit/course evaluations, measured on a scale from 1-10, to representation on course boards and the Governing Body. Student feedback informs the annual self-evaluation document, which synthesises reports from unit/courses. The annual self-evaluation document includes data on student retention, achievement and employment as well as NSS outcomes and this, together with the reports on teaching observation, is used to inform the action plan. For example, student concerns regarding facilities for HE students led to the creation of a dedicated HE room. Teaching observations are used along with student feedback to inform staff development plans that are submitted to the awarding bodies.

32 The quality and accuracy of course information is assured by a process involving sign-off by curriculum heads, which is subject to the approval by the Director of Curriculum. Marketing is in charge of the publication of course information. The responsibilities of the awarding partners are outlined in the respective responsibilities checklist.

The relevant code of governance: such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) or the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

33 The College has a system of student representation for HE students. Elected student representatives sit on course boards as well as Student Council and there is a student governor on the Board of Governors. The student governor attends student council along with senior staff to ensure that there is a clear channel of reciprocal communication between the governing body and the student body.

34 Student feedback is also gathered by NSS and the College's internal annual survey which is included in the annual self-evaluation document.

35 The College has a coherent complaints policy. All complaints are logged centrally by the College. The Governing Body receives a report of complaints throughout the year and a summary of complaints is included in the annual self-evaluation document and ACRs.

36 The annual self-evaluation document is received by the Curriculum Quality and Performance Monitoring Committee (formerly the Quality Task and Finish Group) chaired by the Higher Education Governor and by the Board of Governors as a whole, as discussed in paragraph 8. This enables the Board of Governors and its subcommittees to monitor and review the student experience through student feedback and to ensure that student complaints are effectively addressed.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure consumer protection obligations are met (Competition and Markets Authority guidance)

37 To ensure that information for intended audiences is clear, easily accessible and reliable, the College has a clear Higher Education Communication and Information Policy. The policy was developed to facilitate and manage the production and distribution of information whether it is written, oral or electronic relating to the management, delivery or assessment of any HE courses. It aims to ensure that there is full, accurate and timely information made available to students, staff and associated awarding partners.

38 Staff have been informed about the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) guidelines across the College, including HE staff, the Admissions Team and the Marketing Team through meetings, updates and training events.

39 The College has a clear and comprehensive HE Admissions Policy. The Admissions Policy is HE-specific and requires all potential applicants to be interviewed. Applicants are assessed on academic achievement or predicted achievement, personal statements, references, interview/portfolios/audition and selection events by tutors. RPL opportunities are also discussed at the interview and students confirm that the interview is useful. The College also organises Open Evenings to enable students to make informed decisions about their course. These events are augmented with online information and hard copy leaflets.

40 The College has a widening participation statement to encourage inclusivity and provides opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning and experience. The review team discussed prior experience opportunities with staff regarding the College website reference to mature applicants. The review team considers such reference as a potential barrier to making an application. The College should consider the terminology used in public information of the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) policy to ensure that prospective students with relevant experience are sufficiently clear on their eligibility to apply. This is an **area for development**.

41 The College has a Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy. This policy has been developed to ensure that complaints, compliments and suggestions are listened to and dealt with in a timely, sensitive and appropriate manner. The Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy is clear, owned by the Assistant Director of Quality, and is available on the website. Complaints are included in the ACRs and reported to governors.

42 The College considers the website as the main gateway to published information to provide accurate, up-to-date information about courses and other information relating to the College's mission, strategic priorities and corporate information. The website provides recent case studies of current students and alumni who have studied at the College together with information about the units to be studied and assessment.

43 Students receive a comprehensive course handbook to gain a fuller understanding of the course. While on the course, students receive a unit or module handbook for each unit or module being studied. Students confirm that the Course Handbook allows them to keep on track and work towards the expectations set for their course.

44 The College uses several sources to supply students with current information including the College website, the HE Prospectus, UCAS, Course Handbook, Unit Guides and Assessment Briefs and an Induction Programme.

45 Academic staff, in conjunction with the Dean of Higher Education and the Director of Curriculum, are responsible for ensuring that the information regarding their courses including entry requirements is accurate, with a central repository in place to manage version control.

Student protection measures as expressed through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) Principles of Good Administration, and HEFCE's Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures

46 The College has a Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy with appropriate responsibilities and timelines. It is managed independently by the Quality Team who refer complaints to the appropriate manager for investigation.

47 The procedure for a complainant to follow with appropriate timescales is clear and responsibilities outlined from receipt of the complaint by the Quality Officer to the appeal stage through the Principal. The College Complaints Procedure is made available to students on the website and the College states that its use is made clear during induction. Students confirm that they are aware of how to make a complaint. The student Complaints Policy and accompanying form are accessible from the College's webpages, alongside other key policies.

48 The College has a policy on course closure which follows the HEFCE guidelines for Course Changes or Closures and a flowchart of responsibilities that clearly outlines the processes and support offered to students to ensure their studies are protected. The Higher Education Student Contract, published on the College website, refers to what would happen in the event of course changes and confirms that a course would not be withdrawn until all enrolled students were 'taught out'.

49 The College experienced a course closure following the withdrawal of the validation of the HND Motor Vehicle Operations programme by the awarding organisation. The Curriculum Development group, a subgroup of HEG discussed the withdrawal and made recommendations to HEG, including the support needed for remaining students to be

taught out. The College provided clear evidence of tracking and managing the remaining students through the process. College staff discussed this closure with the review team and confirmed the support the College provided for the students to ensure they had the opportunity to complete their award.

Rounded judgement

50 The review team considered the quality of the student academic experience at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College, including student outcomes. The College has demonstrated through its governance structure and working with its awarding partners that it meets all the baseline regulatory requirements in this area effectively.

51 The review team identified one area for development, which relates to considering the terminology used in public information of the APEL policy to ensure that prospective students with relevant experiences are sufficiently clear on their eligibility to apply.

52 The review team concludes that there can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements.

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