



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of East End Computing and Business College Ltd

October 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at East End Computing and Business College Ltd (ECBC). The review took place from 9 to 11 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Liam Curran
- Mr Josef Mueller
- Mr Michael Abiodun Olatokun (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education).

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The extensive personalised academic support provided to students with a diverse range of needs that enables them to develop both academically and professionally (Expectation B4).
- The appointment of an independent internal verifier for the Health & Social Care programme, who is not a member of teaching staff, adds additional rigour to assessment processes along with pedagogic support and development for teaching staff (Expectation B7).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By April 2018:

- ensure that prospective students and current students are aware of the opportunity available to them to use the RPL within their course (Expectation B6)
- extend current processes to implement an explicit and transparent process for making external verifier reports available to all students (Expectation B7)
- establish formal written agreements with providers of work placements in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party (Expectation B10)
- processes for checking information on the College website are to be applied in a timely manner ensuring the content is up to date at all times (Expectation C)
- implement a more strategic approach to the development of enhancement activities and identify leadership responsibility for the planning, oversight, delivery and evaluation of College-level initiatives (Enhancement).

By August 2018:

- develop and implement a periodic review process for the College's Pearson provision (Expectations B8 and A3.3).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to further improve the IT Infrastructure to enable students to fully use the College's VLE and online resources (Expectation B4).

## **Financial sustainability, management and governance**

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

### **Important note**

Since the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) visit to the College, QAA has undertaken a full investigation under its Concerns Scheme into specific aspects of East End Computing and Business College Ltd's provision. Please see the [Concerns report](#) for the latest findings in relation to Expectations B2 and B6 of the Quality Code.

## About the provider

The East End Computing and Business College Ltd (the College) is based in London, established in 2001 to provide educational programmes in business management, IT and in other disciplines, where appropriate, to local and European students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. ECBC has been an Edexcel-approved centre since 2009. At present, it offers two programmes: the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business and the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) in Health and Social Care.

In September 2013, the College was reviewed for the first time by QAA. The review resulted in confidence being placed in the management of academic standards and quality of the programmes and learning opportunities it offered on behalf of its awarding bodies, and reliance being placed on its public information.

In September 2014 a further review was undertaken by QAA for Educational Oversight. The outcome of the review was similar to the previous review placing confidence in the College's management and oversight of its provision. In September 2015, an annual monitoring visit was carried out by QAA and judged the College as 'making commendable progress' on the recommendations identified by the previous review team.

The College has 331 students enrolled, which reflects a decrease in student numbers over the past three years accounted for by the Student Number Control (SNC) that began from September 2014. Since then the College is allowed to recruit 200 students per year for both courses, with access to financial support from the Student Loan Company (SLC).

The College opted to participate in the Year-2 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) receiving a 'Provisional Award'. This was due to the College not having a full three years of performance data and the College has now participated in its first National Student Survey (NSS), submitted Destination of Leavers from Higher Education data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Unistats data.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Findings

1.1 The College works with the awarding organisation Pearson, which is responsible for the setting of academic threshold standards and ensuring that the qualifications the College offers are at the appropriate level in relation to the FHEQ. The awarding organisation also appoints external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained.

1.2 The College is responsible for the delivery and assessment of the programmes and thereby contributes to the maintenance of academic standards. The College is also responsible for the recruitment and support of students. The College manages academic standards by implementing the awarding organisation's quality procedures. This process is overseen by the Academic Board. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team scrutinised the College's quality assurance documentation, external examiner reports, and met with senior and academic staff.

1.4 The College has adequate procedures in place for monitoring its academic standards on behalf of the awarding organisation. Internal Verifier reports moderate assessment and Annual Quality Reports monitor academic standards. Pearson external

examiner reports are produced and discussed by Academic Board, as well as the Senior Management Team (SMT). A Pearson external examiner report confirms that the management of academic standards is appropriate and that assessment decisions meet the criteria for HND awards. In addition, Pearson monitors the College's management of academic standards through its annual Academic Management Review process. Academic staff are familiar with level descriptors, Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification characteristics.

1.5 The College fulfils its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards and manages them effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

1.6 The awarding organisation is responsible for the academic framework and the regulations that govern how credit is awarded. The College ensures that the assessment of credit is carried out in line with those requirements. The College's Quality Assurance Handbook outlines the principles and procedures underlying the assessment process. Assessment briefs indicate the marking criteria, task requirements and necessary evidence that students need to demonstrate in order to be awarded credit. Assessments are internally and externally verified. Academic Board is responsible for ensuring adherence to the internal assessment procedures as well as to the Pearson academic framework and regulations. A Quality and Standards Committee is in place to review policies and procedures. This design would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7 The review team has examined the documentation related to quality policies, assessment processes, external examiner reports and Pearson Academic Management Reports, and met with senior and academic staff and students.

1.8 The College's organisational structure, student recruitment and admissions, assessment, staff and physical resources, and policies and procedures are in compliance with the awarding organisation's requirements. The design of the committee structure allows for the separation between the commercial and academic sides, with SMT being chaired by the Executive Director, and Academic Board by the Principal. There is evidence that the College takes necessary action in response to recommendations from external reports. The student handbook makes appropriate reference to the College's general policies and procedures. Programme handbooks make reference to the awarding body's policies and academic frameworks. Module handbooks contain detailed information on assessment requirements.

1.9 The College has appropriate academic governance arrangements in place and fulfils its obligations with regard to academic and assessment regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

1.10 A recent Pearson Academic Management Review identified a lack of a policy on special consideration and reasonable adjustments. A Special Considerations and Reasonable Adjustments Policy is now in place, but the review team has observed a lack of awareness of this policy among staff and students, and it is not communicated to students other than being placed on the College website.

**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**

1.11 The College maintains programme records for the two HND courses in Business and Health & Social Care that it delivers, in the form of online programme specifications. The College maintains more detailed programme handbooks which are given to students.

1.12 Programme handbooks and specifications include the FHEQ positioning of the qualification, programme structure, programme aims, unit/credit details, guided learning hours, teaching and learning strategy and assessment strategy (collectively 'the academic standards'). The programme specification is changed through due process, that is through decisions ratified in meetings of the College's Academic Board. Minutes are made of these decisions and changes to the records are publicised through hosting both the previous and revised specifications on the College's website. The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team compared the difference between Business programme specifications from the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years and conducted a desk-based analysis of Academic Board meeting minutes where the contents of the Business programme were amended. Students and staff were asked questions to ascertain the extent of their knowledge of, and amendments to, the records in meetings.

1.14 The review team found that the records contained the academic standards as described above. The records were displayed in locations accessible to current, prospective and past students. Amendments to the programmes were made at the most senior level in minuted meetings. These changes were made publicly available on the website. Students and academic staff demonstrated awareness of these changes, with student representatives articulating an understanding of the different course structure names (RQF and QCF).

1.15 The records contain the necessary requirements and there is sufficient transparency and clarity regarding amendments. Staff and students are aware of both the records and changes to these programmes. The team concludes that the Expectation is met with low risk.

**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**

1.16 Formal responsibility for the approval of the College's HND programmes, which includes ensuring engagement with all the relevant external reference points, lies with the awarding organisation Pearson. The College's responsibility is limited to the selection of optional units within programmes and the design of suitable teaching, learning and assessment strategies that ensures students have the appropriate opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes of their programme.

1.17 It is the responsibility of the College SMT to approve new College programme proposals on the advice of the Academic Board. This also includes the approval of modification to existing programmes.

1.18 The College also uses the annual monitoring process as a mechanism to improve the design and content of its programmes. Key information such as student feedback, student achievement, the quality of learning opportunities, curriculum and student engagement data are considered to promote the enhancement of the provision.

1.19 The arrangements in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.20 In testing the Expectation the review team examined a range of policy documents and minutes of meetings. The team also met with senior and academic staff and students.

1.21 The quality manual sets out clear guidance with regards to the teaching and assessment of students and academic staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the Pearson Centre Guide to assessment levels 4 to 7.

1.22 Senior College staff also confirmed there is rigorous discussion with academic teaching staff and students to ensure that programme design and module selection meets the employment and progression needs of students. Within the Pearson Higher National Framework, the College has the autonomy to construct the programme of study through the delivery of mandatory and optional units.

1.23 The College has two well-established HND programmes in Business and Health & Social Care and the College has not proposed the delivery of any new programmes. Therefore, the effectiveness of the internal programme approval process could not be ascertained. However, staff clearly articulated the procedure that would be followed and that new programme approval decisions would be based on perceived market demand, financial consideration, and general resources that includes staff expertise.

1.24 The awarding organisation conducts annual reviews to monitor the College's capacity to deliver programmes effectively and therefore its ability to maintain academic standards. Therefore, the review team concludes the arrangements in place for programme approval are appropriate and allow the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.25 It is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to set the module learning outcomes and associated assessment strategies for all Higher National Qualifications so that they meet the external requirements of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and professional bodies.

1.26 The College plays a defined operational role in the assessment process through the effective use of the regulatory and quality frameworks provided by Pearson, supported by its own internal assessment policies.

1.27 The College is responsible for the setting and internal verification of assessment briefs, first marking, and internal verification of assessments in accordance with Pearson guidelines. It is the role of the College Standardisation Committee to have institutional oversight of all aspects of the assessment process to ensure academic standards are being maintained, and this committee reports to the Academic Board.

1.28 There are a number of policies in place providing guidance to staff on ensuring the assessment and achievement of learning outcomes is appropriately conducted and that academic standards are being maintained. These include policies for assessment, internal verification, recognition of prior learning, extenuating circumstances and student malpractice.

1.29 Assessment boards are held for all of the College's programmes in accordance with Pearson's requirements. It is the role of the assessment board to make recommendations on student grades and achievements and to consider extenuating circumstances, cases of malpractice, and student progression.

1.30 The arrangements in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.31 The review team tested the Expectation by studying the College quality handbook and minutes of relevant meetings. The team also met with senior and academic staff and students.

1.32 The review team found the College has adequate assessment policies that ensure credit and qualifications are awarded upon specific learning outcomes being met. The College internal verification policy and verification process ensures assessment decisions are appropriate and confirms learning outcomes have been met by students.

1.33 College assessment boards are conducted in accordance with awarding body requirements, and are chaired by the College Principal. Mitigating circumstances and cases of academic misconduct are received and discussed at these boards.

1.34 External examiner reports confirm standards for all programmes are being met. In addition, Pearson's Annual Academic Management Review evaluates the College's quality systems, including the management and delivery of assessment of its qualifications. Current reports confirm the College is compliant with Pearson's regulations regarding assessment.

1.35 The review team considers the College's approach and processes regarding assessment are effective and clearly understood by all staff. This Expectation is met and the 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**

1.36 The College understands that it has a role in the quality monitoring process and undertakes an annual monitoring review of its programmes as part of its quality enhancement process.

1.37 It is the responsibility of the College Academic Board to ensure academic standards are being maintained and to consider and approve the annual monitoring reports of programmes, and monitor how this process can continually enhance the provision. In addition, the College's internal review processes are examined as part of the awarding organisation's Annual Academic Management Review.

1.38 Programme leaders take the lead and produce the Annual Quality Monitoring report and gather information from a wide range of College sources. The report template has a range of sections that must be completed and evaluated. Within this process, good practice and areas for improvement are identified, supported by an action plan. It is the responsibility of the Academic Board to monitor all reports.

1.39 The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.40 The team tested the Expectation by examining annual monitoring reports, awarding organisation reports and meeting senior and academic staff and students.

1.41 The College's processes for the annual monitoring of programmes are sound and well understood by academic staff and programme leaders. Annual reviews are comprehensive and include aspects of student enrolment, teaching and learning via module reviews, and consideration of external examiner reports. Senior and academic members of staff the review team met confirmed that all action plans, an outcome of the annual review process, are monitored within team and senior management meetings.

1.42 Staff the review team met indicated there is no formal process beyond annual monitoring that contributes to the periodic review of programmes. Senior staff recognise that it is the responsibility of the College to undertake the periodic review of programmes as delegated by the awarding organisation. Senior staff confirmed that the periodic review of programmes would commence at the end of the academic year. The review team have made a recommendation within Expectation B8 of the report regarding periodic review of programmes.

1.43 The review team considers the arrangements for the annual monitoring of programmes are appropriate and effective. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate.

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

**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**

1.44 While the design of programmes and modules is the responsibility of the awarding organisation, the assessment of learning outcomes is the College's responsibility. The College uses external expertise to verify the assessment of learning outcomes. Independent external examiners are appointed by the awarding organisation. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.45 In considering this Expectation the review team examined external examiner reports, relevant meeting minutes and related documentation. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.46 External examiners scrutinise a sample of student work, whereby they select their own sample, and produce an external examiner report. They comment on whether the standards set are appropriate for the level and qualification, and comment on whether the assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate. They also comment on the process of internal verification. The recent external examiner reports for both programmes are positive. There is an ongoing dialogue with external examiners in addition to the formal verification process, for example external examiner views are sought when updating assignments.

1.47 An independent internal verifier, who is not a member of the teaching team, has been appointed for the Health & Social Care programme, which adds an additional element of externality.

1.48 The College makes effective use of independent expertise to maintain academic standards. Therefore the review team considers that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

1.49 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.50 There are seven Expectations in this area, six of which have been met with a low level of risk and one met with a moderate level of risk identified. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice.

1.51 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding organisation at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The awarding organisation Pearson is responsible for the overall programme design making explicit use of external reference points such as the FHEQ, and Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the programme committee for Business and Health & Social Care to discuss and decide on programme delivery, review, evaluation and put forward recommended changes to programmes to the Academic Board.

2.3 The College Academic Board has the responsibility for the selection of units within programmes. The College is also responsible for programme planning in relation to the delivery and design of teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

2.4 In choosing optional modules, the Academic Board consults with students, teaching staff, and information and advice gained from the annual monitoring process and external examiners in order to make informed decisions regarding the choosing of modules. Prior to a new programme being offered the College deliberates on the purpose of the programme and how it will support its strategic objectives.

2.5 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.6 The review tested this Expectation through the examination of policies and relevant minutes of meetings and through discussion with senior and teaching staff.

2.7 The decisions on any new programmes would initially be taken between the College Chief Executive and the Principal, based on the perceived market demand, financial consideration and general resources including staff expertise. Academic staff did confirm to the review team that when choosing units within programmes consideration is given to how this will assist in the progression of students to level 6 top-up degrees. Decisions on the final choosing of units are made by the Academic Planning Committee reporting to the Academic Board.

2.8 Given the size of the College and its focus on a small number of well-established programmes, the review team is satisfied that the College management processes are sufficient to ensure that decisions on new programmes and the choice of units are made effectively.

2.9 The review team considers the College discharges its limited responsibility for programme design and approval appropriately. The Expectation is met and the 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 to Higher Education**

**Findings**

2.10 The College operates an Admissions Policy and publicises the policy online, making use of local newspapers for recruitment purposes.

2.11 The Admissions Policy has been deliberately mapped against the Expectation contained in Chapter B2 of the Quality Code. It was renewed shortly before the review visit in August 2017. Students are required to submit an online application form initially. They must then provide documentary evidence of their ability in English. At the College they are required to sit a written test and attend two interviews. The design and delivery of these processes allows the Expectation to be met.

2.12 The review team tested the Admissions Policy through desk-based analysis of its 2016 and 2017 iterations. The team reviewed minutes of meetings in which amendments were considered. This was triangulated in meetings with the head of provider, students, academic staff and admissions officers.

2.13 The Admissions Policy was updated in August 2017 in response to issues raised over previous years with the consistency applied during recruitment to ensuring the appropriate level of English language both written and spoken. The College has improved the robustness and suitability of its selection procedures through testing of students' English language ability, adding an additional level of assessment into the interview process, as well as a second interview. These changes were implemented for the 2017-18 recruitment cycle and the positive impact of the introduction of these changes was a recurrent theme in meetings with academic staff, students, the head of provider and administrative staff. Academic staff noted a considerable improvement in the engagement of students as a result. Newly recruited students spoke positively about the robustness of the process.

2.14 Although processes are working effectively for recruiting students with the appropriate language skills that enable them to engage fully in the course and meet the requirements of the awarding organisation, the review team noted that the College does not explicitly and clearly outline in its marketing collateral how a mature applicant could use equivalent experience against the formal qualifications requested. This information would allow mature entrants the option to use experiential learning to demonstrate entry requirements. This option was made clearer in the Admissions Policy itself; however, the review team felt that the marketing collateral referred to, and solicited applications from, 'school leavers' only.

2.15 The review team concludes that the content and the operation of the College's Admissions Policy meets the Expectation in Chapter B2 of the Quality Code but with moderate risk.

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

**Important note**

The outcome from this Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) relating to this Expectation of the UK Quality Code as outlined above, has been superseded by the findings arising from a more detailed investigation of specific aspects of this Expectation as identified through the QAA Concerns Scheme. The report from the investigation into concerns raised found that the College did not meet this Expectation - please see the [Concerns report](#) for further details.

**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**

2.16 The College lists high quality education in terms of learning and teaching as the first objective in its strategic plan. The College has developed a Teaching and Learning Strategy, which reflects its understanding of learning and teaching. The Teaching and Learning Strategy sets out the College's expectations and aspirations with regard to classroom delivery, assessment and feedback, resources, and expectations from staff as well as students. The College has mapped its own processes and procedures against the Expectation B3 of the Quality Code. The College receives regular feedback on the effectiveness of its learning and teaching provision and its facilities through the Student-Staff Liaison Committee, programme committees, Academic Management Reports, and other formal and informal feedback mechanisms. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.17 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing College policies with regard to learning and teaching and related documents, the use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE), and through meetings with senior and academic staff as well as with students.

2.18 Students give a very positive evaluation of their learning experiences at the College. Teachers are described as knowledgeable and supportive, friendly and approachable, and as having a passion for teaching. Students receive help with assignments through the provision of workshops and tutorials, and receive regular feedback on their work. There is a lack of awareness among the teaching staff of the Teaching and Learning Strategy document, which also lacks an implementation plan. However, it is evident that development and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment is being promoted through dialogue among academic staff, and supported at strategic level by the Principal, albeit these do not seem to be driven by the strategy document.

2.19 Teaching and learning resources are assessed on a regular basis. The adequacy of resources is further commented on in external examiner and Academic Management Reports. While there is positive student feedback on the VLE and the e-library, some students express a degree of dissatisfaction with some aspects of the learning resources.

2.20 Academic staff are appropriately qualified and have the necessary experience to teach at the relevant subject level. Lecturers are offered in-house workshops via the induction process, and are encouraged to develop themselves professionally. The College's subscription to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) allows teaching staff to apply for fellowship of the HEA for which they receive support from the College.

2.21 The College has a staff appraisal policy according to which all staff take part in annual staff appraisal, which is carried out by the Principal or their nominee. Annual development goals are agreed between appraiser and appraisee.

2.22 The College monitors the quality of teaching through teaching observations by management. At the same time, peer review is carried out for developmental purposes and supported by peer-review documentation.

2.23 The College works effectively with staff, students and external stakeholders to review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.24 The College, in its Strategic Plan 2015-19, aims to make deliberate efforts to provide opportunities for its students to develop personally and professionally, and to better embed employability skills in the curriculum. The College has policies in place that ensure students are well supported. It has a Teaching and Learning Strategy, which promotes the academic development of students as well as a range of graduate skills. Individual students' development is supported through a range of methods including face-to-face advice from tutors, feedback on assessments and on formative work. Annual programme monitoring is used as a tool to provide an analysis of student development and achievement. The College has mapped its practices against Expectation B4 of the Quality Code. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 The review team tested this Expectation by examining policies and procedures that support students throughout their life-cycle at the College, Staff-Student Liaison meeting minutes, and by meeting with senior, academic and support staff, and students.

2.26 The importance of employability is highlighted to students from the point where they join the programme, through their induction. An effective support system is in place, consisting of direct support, individualised learning plans, as well as personal assistance where required. Where students require additional support, the College provides additional resources, including one-to-one support. Students value the support they receive such as finding work placements, the provision of career workshops, and help with applications for further study. The College has recently introduced an Assessment Tracking Sheet to track students' achievement of the programme learning outcomes as they progress through the course. Given the relatively small size of the institution, there appears to be a good level of integration between the various functions that support student development and achievement. Resource needs are discussed at Academic Board and at the senior management meetings. Feedback from students, formal and informal, is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the support provided.

2.27 The College takes care to ensure that its students are well supported. The review team considers the extensive personalised support provided to students with a diverse range of needs to develop academically and professionally, which enables student development and achievement, to be **good practice**.

2.28 While students reported positively on the teaching they receive as well as the support that is provided, they also expressed concern about some of the learning resources and facilities, in particular the number of computers available for self-study, and the slow Wi-Fi speed, which impedes access to the VLE. The College senior management is aware of those concerns and has started to address them by planning to provide an additional computer lab, offering finance for students to purchase laptops and are working with contractors to upgrade Wi-Fi provision. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to further improve the IT infrastructure to enable students to fully use the College's VLE and online resources.

2.29 The College has an effective system in place for student support. The Expectation is met and the 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**

2.30 The College provides a number of methods for engaging students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their programmes. These are summarised in the Student Handbook.

2.31 The College has deliberately mapped its approach to student engagement against the Expectation in the relevant Chapter of the Quality Code. The College supports a student representative system and distributes module feedback and evaluation forms to gather direct feedback from students on their teaching, learning and assessment experience. Students are also invited to be members of strategic decision-making College meetings.

2.32 The review team assessed the impact of the approach to student engagement by meeting with staff members and students and reading the minutes of meetings attended by student representatives.

2.33 The evidence shows that formal student representation is working effectively. Over the last two years there have been a number of factors relating to the quality of learning opportunities that students have raised to College management where the review team was able to identify substantive action taken by both academic and administrative staff in relation to the issues raised, particularly the working spaces. The team noted past and current students' confidence in the receptivity of staff at all levels to acting on the basis of their feedback, which was a consistent theme reported from a cross-section of meetings where all stakeholders agreed that student engagement was a clear priority from induction day onwards.

2.34 Students with concerns relating to the quality of learning opportunities are given direct access to discuss these issues with the Principal and other staff. In light of this, and the College's culture of receptivity to acting on student feedback, the review team concludes that the design and operation of the College's student engagement activities meets the Expectation and 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**

2.35 The assessment of students is carried out in accordance with the College assessment policy. It is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to develop learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. The College is responsible for the setting and internal verification of assessment briefs and the marking and internal verification of all assessments that includes student feedback in accordance with Pearson's assessment guidance and unit specifications.

2.36 The assessment processes within the College are governed by appropriate policies that include internal verification, assessment and feedback, malpractice, assessment appeals, plagiarism and recognition of prior learning. It is the responsibility of College teaching staff to have assessment oversight within units and design assessment briefs that are contextualised with clear assessment grading criteria. Tutors make use of standardised pro formas for the design of assessment briefs and internal verification purposes.

2.37 Programme handbooks contain essential assessment information for students pursuing a qualification in either Business or Health & Social Care. This information includes a programme overview, programme structure, list of core and specialist modules, assessments and certification. Programme specifications for both programmes outline how both formative and summative assessments are set for students.

2.38 Students confirmed that within their individual unit assessments they received instant formative feedback from tutors allowing them to draft and develop assignments prior to their final submission.

2.39 The College arrangements for the management and implementation of the assessment process would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.40 The review team tested the Expectation through a review of external examiner reports, awarding organisation reports, assessment documentation, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, and programme handbooks. The review team also met senior College staff, teaching staff, support staff and students.

2.41 Programme leaders have overall responsibility for ensuring the assessment process operates effectively and engages with relevant internal staff and external examiners. The College operates a standardisation committee for both programmes, which reports to the Academic Board. It is the responsibility of this committee to ensure all teaching materials are properly prepared and that teaching staff fully comply with the assessment regulations of the College and guidelines of the awarding organisation.

2.42 Staff indicated that within the assessment design process they are encouraged by the external examiner to undertake learning outcome mapping between units that enables integrated assignments to be developed, thus reducing the assessment burden on students. In addition, teaching staff confirmed that they make effective use of the online checking system for assignment briefs provided by Pearson, which is an additional checking procedure to support the College's internal verification system. The internal

verification of assessment briefs and assessment decisions for both programmes offered by the College is undertaken by an external independent consultant for the Health & Social Care programme and the College Principal for the Business programme.

2.43 The College operates assessment boards through the Assessment Committee. This committee is responsible for ratifying student grades and dealing with all matters that relate to the assessment process ensuring fairness, integrity and the maintenance of academic standards.

2.44 External examiner reports indicate that the College assessment and internal verification processes are sound. Reports for the HND in Health & Social Care confirm the College operates comprehensive, clear and helpful internal verification procedures on both assignment briefs and assessment decisions. External examiners' comments were complimentary of the developmental nature of comments made by the College's independent internal verifier to assessors that were supportive to the assessment process. In addition, the Pearson Annual Academic Management Review reports confirm the College is compliant with the awarding organisation's requirements with regard to the management of assessment.

2.45 The College operates a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy that is overseen by the College Principal and Academic Board. This policy is underpinned by five principles that give consideration to the achievement of previous learning outcomes and credit, transparency, advice and guidance, quality assurance and equal rigour to other assessment methods. During the review, the team met with support staff who indicated that RPL is managed on a case-by-case basis with the final decision being made by academic staff.

2.46 While there is a much prescribed RPL policy in place, the actual process is not promoted in either programme specifications, within marketing materials, or on the College website. The team **recommends** the College ensure that prospective and current students are aware of the opportunity available to them to use RPL within their course.

2.47 Students the review team met confirmed the College has in place anti-plagiarism software, accessible via the VLE. The use of this software is well embedded among students and they confirmed it helps them in managing and developing their academic and writing skills. In addition, students indicated they were made fully aware during their induction of all assessment regulations and the assessment process linked to their course.

2.48 The review team found that the College ensures that all students are assessed by a valid and reliable assessment process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

#### **Important note**

The outcome from this Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) relating to this Expectation of the UK Quality Code, as outlined above, has been superseded by the findings arising from a more detailed investigation of specific aspects of this Expectation as identified through the QAA Concerns Scheme. The report from the investigation into concerns raised found that the College did not meet this Expectation - please see the [Concerns report](#) for further details.



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

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

#### **Findings**

2.49 It is the responsibility of the awarding organisation to appoint independent external examiners. They visit the College at least once a year, scrutinise a sample of student work, and produce a report. During their visit, they meet with staff as well as students. External examiners comment on whether the standards set are appropriate for the level and qualification, and ensure that the assessment of learning outcomes is conducted in a rigorous, consistent and fair manner. Their report comments on programme delivery, resources, teaching, learning, and assessments, including the process of internal verification. They identify best practice and suggest recommendations, which are considered by the Academic Board. The awarding organisation also undertakes Academic Management Reviews, reporting on the management of assessment and the verification process. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing the documentation related to external examining, such as external examiner reports and Academic Management Reviews, and meeting minutes where recommendations are considered. It held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.51 External examiner reports are comprehensive and thorough. The recent external examiner reports for both programmes are positive, particularly the one for Health & Social Care. Recommendations made by external examiners are acted upon. For example, there is evidence that a recommendation from an external examiner report to split the assessment of a unit into two components is being addressed by the College. Programme leaders manage the relationship with external examiners. They maintain a continuous dialogue with them and liaise with them on issues as they arise. Assignment briefs are checked by external examiners, and the College also uses an online checking system for assignments provided by the awarding organisation. Feedback from this service is used to inform staff development. The review team considers the appointment of an independent internal verifier for the Health & Social Care programme, who is not a member of teaching staff, adds additional rigour to assessment processes along with pedagogic support and development for teaching staff, to be **good practice**.

2.52 Elements of external examiner reports are shared with student representatives, but they are not shared with the entire student body. Student representatives are expected to feed back to their constituency. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College extends current processes to implement an explicit and transparent process for making external examiner reports available to all students.

2.53 The College has an effective system in place to engage with external examiners on an ongoing basis and act upon recommendations from external examiner reports. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.54 The College programme monitoring process is based around evaluating all programmes using an Annual Quality Monitoring report that ensures constant monitoring and enhancement. All College quality processes are tested and evaluated within these reviews and cover areas such as teaching and learning, the learning environment and resources, assessment and feedback, student support and progression, as well as statistical data.

2.55 Feedback from students, academic staff, and senior managers contributes to the programme monitoring process, which results in an action plan. In addition to the internal College monitoring process, the awarding organisation undertake an Annual Academic Management Review of the College quality procedures and practices in place that includes the arrangements for programme monitoring and review.

2.56 It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to take the lead and produce the Annual Quality Monitoring report and gather information from a wide range of College sources. The report template has a range of sections that must be completed and evaluated. Within this process, areas of good practice and areas for improvement are identified, supported by an action plan. It is the responsibility of the Academic Board to monitor all reports.

2.57 The College arrangements for programme monitoring and review would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.58 In considering the Expectation, the review team examined annual monitoring reports, Pearson Annual Academic Management Reports, and relevant minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

2.59 The College annual monitoring process is thorough and covers a wide range of indicators. Finalised monitoring reports are submitted to the College Academic Board and include aspects of programme enrolment, progression and achievement data, student feedback, the outcomes of module reviews and consideration of Standards Verifier reports.

2.60 Action plans are developed and monitored by the Programme Leaders and this is supplemented by regular meetings with senior management and teaching staff. This process permits for timely intervention and the identification and sharing of good practice among staff, and enables senior management to monitor programme performance.

2.61 The most recent Annual Academic Management Review report confirmed the College has in place appropriate arrangements for annual monitoring and review.

2.62 Documentation provided by the College indicated that it undertook periodic reviews of its programmes. When the review team met with academic staff they were informed that the periodic review of programmes had not yet begun and that this process would take place at the end of the academic year. The review team **recommends** the College develops and implements a periodic review process for its Pearson provision.

2.63 The review team found that the College senior management and teaching staff were adequately managing their responsibilities ensuring programme monitoring and review

that was organised and effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met; however, the level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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**

2.64 The College sets out its approach to this Expectation in its Academic Appeal Policy and Procedures and Complaint Policy and Procedures documents.

2.65 The policy documents have been produced in line with the relevant Chapter of the Quality Code. Students are offered an informal resolution before escalation to more formal procedures where necessary. The design of the policy documents would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.66 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by conducting a desk-based analysis of the policy documents and asking questions concerning the treatment of student complaints and academic appeals in meetings with students and staff.

2.67 Staff remarked that no formal complaints had ever been escalated beyond the initial informal stage. All staff questioned about the policy documents were fluent and consistent in their requirements. Staff and students spoke to a clear culture of informal complaint resolution at the earliest opportunity. Students were able to point to a number of areas where complaints about the quality of learning opportunities resulted in positive developments and action at the College, and were also fluent in the requirements of the academic appeals policy.

2.68 Staff are aware of the procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints relating to the quality of learning opportunities. These procedures contribute to a culture of informal, early resolution of complaints. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.69 The College has one instance in which learning opportunities are delivered with others: as part of the course requirements of the HND Health & Social Care, students are required to undertake 200 hours of work placement in a health and social care setting. These placements can include a wide range of social work settings, such as care homes, early years' centres, or nurseries.

2.70 It is the students' responsibility to find their own work placement. However, the College provides the students with support in securing a placement such as pointing them to volunteering websites. The College assists students by arranging Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for students. Academic staff also provide employability workshops that focus on how students should prepare for work readiness in the health and social care sectors.

2.71 The review team investigated the arrangements for work placements in meetings with senior management, students, and teaching staff. It consulted the documentation that the College has in place, such as the Student Work Placement Pack and letter to employers, which include information for placement providers on what is required of them in supporting the students. The review team also examined the documentation for Unit 4: Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care, of which the work placement forms a mandatory component. In addition, it conducted telephone interviews with placement providers.

2.72 The Work Placement Pack gives students and providers useful information about the expectations associated with the placement. It contains a number of pro formas for students and placement providers to complete, to ensure that hours are logged, supervisor feedback is provided to the students, and evaluation of and reflection on the experience of students takes place. Students are alerted to the work placement requirement at the very beginning of the programme, to allow them enough time to find a placement. The programme leader for HND Health & Social Care acts as the liaison between placement providers and the College. Mandatory training is provided to students prior to undertaking the placement. Students confirmed to the review team that they found the workshops very useful and motivating in preparing them for the placement. They know who to contact should they have queries or encounter difficulties when on placement. While completion of the placement hours is a prerequisite for completing Unit 4 of the Health & Social Care programme, and placement providers confirm the hours that have been completed, the assessment of the Unit consists of a different set of tasks, and placement providers are not involved in that assessment.

2.73 Students have to find placements for themselves, but the College offers support in this process. The programme leader for Health & Social Care has a wide range of placement contacts. The College recently partnered with an organisation to provide placement opportunities for students; however, this partnership has now ended. Checks on new providers are carried out through a visit to the placement provider before a new provider is accepted by the College. In order to ensure a consistent student experience, the review team **recommends** establishing formal written agreements with providers of work placements in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party.

2.74 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

2.75 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

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

2.76 In reaching its judgements about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.77 There are 11 Expectations in this area of which 10 are applicable to the College. All that are applicable are met, with nine identified as a low level of risk and two identified having a moderate risk level.

2.78 The review team identified two features of good practice, made four recommendations and highlighted one affirmation.

2.79 The features of good practice in this area are concerned with Expectations B4 and B7.

2.80 The first feature of good practice in Expectation B4, the review team commend the level of personalised academic support provided to students with a diverse range of needs that enables them to develop both academically and professionally.

2.81 The review team's second area of good practice relates to Expectations B6 and B7 highlighting the appointment of an independent internal verifier for the Health & Social Care programme, which adds additional rigour to assessment processes along with pedagogic support and development for teaching staff.

2.82 Recommendations made in this section are concerned with Expectations B6, B7, B8 and B10.

2.83 The first recommendation, in Expectation B6, requires the College to ensure that prospective students are aware of the opportunity available to them to use RPL within their course, and the second in B7 recommends an extension of current processes be developed to implement an explicit and transparent process for making external examiner reports available to all students.

2.84 The third recommendation under Expectation B10 requires the College to establish formal written agreements with providers of work placements in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities for each party.

2.85 The fourth recommendation relates to the review team's finding that the College does not have an explicit process in place for the periodic review of their programmes. They therefore recommend that by July 2018 the College develop and implement a periodic review process for the College's Pearson provision.

2.86 The review team noted the steps being taken to further improve the IT infrastructure by the College and identify this as an affirmation as the continuation of this work will enable students to fully use the College's VLE and online resources.

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



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

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

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

##### Findings

3.1 The College uses a range of media to publish information to prospective students, current students and alumni.

3.2 The College includes information on its website, the VLE, paper information and displays of information around the College. Admissions information is given through literature such as local newspapers, magazines, flyers and leaflets. The Principal holds responsibility for updating information about the College. The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The team used a variety of methods to assess the quality of information provided by the College. This included desk-based analysis of the website, use of the VLE, meetings with students and staff, viewing public information displayed in plain sight at the College and triangulating public statements with the College's practices.

3.4 The review team found that the information provided by the College about itself was mostly accurate. Students reported confidence in the variety of communication media used. Despite this there were a small number of pieces of published information that did not represent current College practice and could not in a strict sense be defined as accurate. These included: two references to proactive arrangement of placements where the reality is that these are arranged by students themselves; marketing material that did not make reference to the possibility for mature learners to show that they could meet the admission requirements through work experience; and lastly physical pop-up banners situated around the College that provide out-of-date information advertising level 7 courses that the College no longer offers. Newly registered students (having joined at the start of the 2017-18 academic year) were asked whether they had noted any inconsistencies between the information provided at application and since joining, and reported no such issues.

3.5 The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that processes for checking information on the College website are applied in a timely manner ensuring the contents are up to date at all times. Though the review visit did not give rise to any issues caused by the instances of outdated information referenced above, the College should take action to ensure that applicants from a broad range of backgrounds are not deterred from ubiquitous references to school leavers.

3.6 The vast majority of the information provided by the College is accurate and updated in a timely way, allowing prospective students to make informed decisions. The review team concludes that the Expectation contained in Chapter C of the Quality Code is met, albeit with moderate level of risk.

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

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

3.7 In reaching its judgements on the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a moderate level of risk.

3.8 One recommendation has been made in this section that requires the College to ensure that their processes for checking all information on the College website are applied in a timely manner ensuring the content is up to date at all times.

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The College strategic plan illustrates a range of core values that underpin the College mission. These core values include learning for all, collaborative and innovative teaching and learning, equal opportunity for all, excellent Student Services and an excellent place to work.

4.2 The College considers its quality assurance processes and use of data and information such as annual monitoring reports, Pearson annual reviews, external examiner reports and feedback from students to be fundamental in taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students. It is the Academic Board within the College with responsibility for overall institutional oversight of enhancement.

4.3 The College understands its responsibilities for improving the quality of learning opportunities and ensures that the institutional policies and committee structures are in place to support and facilitate this.

4.4 The College approach to enhancement is not articulated in any discrete or dedicated policy but within the quality manual there is an illustration of the vision to make the College a place of academic excellence. In addition, within the handbook there is a clear reference made of the College's commitment to provide outstanding teaching and learning and offer academic programmes of the highest standard.

4.5 The College arrangements for taking deliberate steps at programme level would enable this Expectation to be met.

4.6 The review team tested the Expectation through a review of external examiners' reports, awarding organisation reports, college documentation, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures, annual monitoring reports and action plans. The review team also met with senior College staff, teaching staff, support staff and students.

4.7 The College internal quality assurance handbook refers to the regular monitoring within programmes. Through this process of evaluation, action plans are created, implemented and monitored in order to provide the best learning experience for students. Staff confirmed that the College uses its internal quality processes as well as reports from external examiners and the awarding organisation Pearson to identify institutional enhancement needs.

4.8 It is the responsibility of the College SMT and the Academic Standards Committee to monitor and support the implementation of College-wide enhancement activities. These arrangements would allow this Expectation to be met.

4.9 Academic staff who met with the review team acknowledged the importance of enhancement, and at programme level there was a very clear and definite desire to be proactive in identifying and implementing enhancement to the student learning experience.

4.10 Staff also confirmed to the review team the effective use of internal quality assurance processes for programme monitoring. External examiners' reports, awarding organisation reports and student feedback has led to a range of deliberate enhancement steps being taken at programme level.

4.11 Examples include a recent reorganisation of the research project for both Pearson HND programmes in Business and Health & Social Care, and provision of employability workshops that supports and prepares Health & Social Care students for work placement. Another example is the introduction of two tracker systems that monitor student performance within units and also the achievement of learning outcomes across all units within the qualification. This allows academic staff and tutors to monitor student progress and provide them with support via individual learning plans.

4.12 Areas of good practice, as well as areas for improvement are identified within tutor and student module evaluations. Through the annual monitoring process and through discussion with academic staff and students there is evidence of continuous improvement at programme level. Examples that were provided to the review team included the recent introduction of anti-plagiarism software and the Moodle platform which students found exceptionally beneficial.

4.13 In addition, there was a unanimous feeling among staff that the review team met that found student feedback at course level to be an effective mechanism for identifying improvements within programmes.

4.14 At an institutional-level approach, enhancement is not clearly articulated anywhere and the responsibilities for enhancement are vague. In addition, there does not appear to be any concrete enhancement initiatives systematically planned and go beyond the review of programme data.

4.15 Therefore, the review team **recommends** the College implements a more strategic approach to the development of enhancement activities and identifies leadership responsibility for the planning, oversight, delivery and evaluation of College-level initiatives.

4.16 The review team recognises that the College is aware of the importance of enhancement and at programme level there is evidence that deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities have been taken. There is, however, a lack of clarity regarding a College strategic approach to enhancement and leadership responsibility for the planning and oversight of the process.

4.17 The team concludes the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

4.18 In reaching its judgements on the enhancement of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

4.19 The review team identified one recommendation in this area requiring the College to implement a more strategic approach to the development of enhancement activities and identify leadership responsibility for College-level initiatives.

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

## Glossary

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

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of

provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Quality Code**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the

higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

**Reference points**

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

**Self-evaluation document**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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