



Quality Review Visit of East Riding College

March 2018

Key findings

QAA's rounded judgements about East Riding College

The QAA review team formed the following rounded judgements about the higher education provision at East Riding 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 East Riding College. The review team advises East Riding College to:

- further develop existing practices for supporting all tutors within the College in the delivery of higher education (Quality Code)
- further evaluate the existing arrangements for student admissions to improve the admissions process (Consumer Protection Obligations)
- review existing programme specifications to further support prospective students in making informed choices (Consumer Protection Obligations)
- update existing processes for communicating course changes and potential course closures to students (Student Protection Measures).

Specified improvements

No **specified improvements** have been identified

About this review

The review visit took place from 13 to 14 March 2018 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Alyson Bird (Student Reviewer)
- Ms Janet Faulkner
- Mr Mark Langley.

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 East Riding College

East Riding College (the College) is a further and higher education college that provides full and part-time higher education courses across a range of subject areas. The College operates at three sites across Yorkshire and Humberside, with higher education delivered from all three, but mainly from campuses in Beverley and Bridlington. The higher education provision covers education, sport, public services, childcare, computing, media, social science, engineering and construction.

The foundation and full degree provision is delivered on behalf of two awarding bodies, the University of Hull and the University of Huddersfield. The College also offers higher education diplomas and certificates on behalf of Pearson. At the time of the review the College had 209 higher education students, of whom one-third are studying part-time.

Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

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

1 The awarding bodies and awarding organisation retain overall responsibility for the academic standards of their awards. Definitive programme documentation makes reference to external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. Programme approval documentation also shows that local economic and employer needs are used as additional reference points, where appropriate. Staff met by the review team demonstrated their understanding of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points.

2 The College has effective arrangements to ensure that the academic standards of its programmes are comparable with those of other UK higher education providers. The awarding bodies and organisation appoint external examiners and verifiers. External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are achieved at a level comparable with the wider UK higher education sector. Comparability of academic standards across the provision is further achieved through monitoring at institutional level by means of the annual monitoring procedures with oversight from the Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board.

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

3 The respective awarding bodies and awarding organisation are responsible for the oversight of academic governance arrangements and have established transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the academic credit and qualifications of their respective awards. There are clear responsibility checklists detailing the distribution of responsibilities in the partnerships.

4 Oversight of academic governance is maintained by an effective reporting framework through the committee structure to the Board of Governors. All committees have clear terms of reference and there are Instruments and Articles for the Board. These Instruments and Articles adopt the Association of Colleges (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and the Eversheds model Code of Conduct for Governors. The Board receives reports, data and policies relating to higher education which enables it to maintain an oversight of academic governance and to address the HEFCE accountability statement. A nominated higher education link governor enhances the level of oversight by the Board.

5 Academic risk is overseen effectively through this reporting structure together with a risk register, which is reported to the Board of Governors and Audit Committee.

6 The ethos of academic freedom and collegiality is evident within the College through opportunities for staff to engage in open discussions, staff forum and surveys, and representation at committee and Governing Body level. The process is further embedded within the freedom of speech code of practice.

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

7 Partnership agreements indicate that both validating universities are responsible for the maintenance of definitive records. Pearson is responsible for maintaining the definitive record, but it provides clear instructions about the records the College must keep. The College's Examinations Manager ensures that the awarding bodies have the required information.

8 The College's internal process for programme approval aligns with the requirements of its awarding bodies to ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for each qualification. Students engage in the programme-writing process.

9 The College's HE Assessment Policy and Procedure and assessment grids exemplify how assessment activities ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where student achievement of relevant learning outcomes meets UK threshold standards. External examiner and external verifiers' reports confirm that internal processes of moderation and verification are rigorous and accord with the awarding bodies' requirements and regard the College's approach as good practice. Students confirm they are involved in learning and assessment procedures and are happy with the diet of activities, and the College uses a variety of surveys and focus groups to inform this process. Student handbooks detail assessment processes. Furthermore, the College's peer observations consider assessment. The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) sets out how students can draw on their prior learning, and accompanying forms and a flow diagram explain the process and its limitations clearly. Through their engagement with the admissions process, staff use prior learning to maximise the student experience, and students who have used RPL to enter their programme recognise the benefit of the policy.

10 The College fully complies with its awarding bodies' processes for the data-led monitoring and review of programmes. Such oversight ensures that monitoring and review explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the required academic standards are being maintained. All members of staff actively engage in improving the quality of learning opportunities. Since the QAA 2012 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review report, the College continues to prioritise higher education quality and strategies and evaluates its higher education provision by drawing on annual monitoring processes and partner quality enhancement reviews. All awarding bodies require annual monitoring. The College assesses these reports internally through its HE Quality Review, Annual Monitoring Review meeting and integrates key issues into its Annual HE Quality Improvement Strategy, Quality Improvement Plan and Operational Plan. Reports progress through the range of committees and boards. Students engage with this process, providing feedback at all points and through the student representative system. The College's effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review meet the baseline regulatory requirements.

11 The oversight of its awarding bodies ensures that the College uses external and independent expertise to set and maintain academic standards. Report templates are set out by the awarding bodies and completed by examiners. The College plans external examiner and external verifier visits and encourages student engagement where possible. Students have the opportunity to access external examiner reports, which are posted on the virtual learning environment (VLE). The College systematically uses external examiner engagement to monitor the performance of the College and individual programmes. The College's Quality and Teaching Standards Unit monitors all external examiner actions and

reports these to the HE Committee. The HE External Examiner Report Policy indicates that the College draws on termly and annual reports throughout its committee structures. All of the foregoing enables the College to meet the baseline requirements.

12 The College's collaborative partnerships with the Universities of Huddersfield and Hull and with Pearson are clear. The College works closely with employers, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and partner organisations across both the Humber and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding areas to ensure that the skills, qualifications and training it develops align with the LEPs' plans.

Rounded judgement

13 The academic standards of higher education courses are set by the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation and the College has demonstrated its effectiveness in meeting the baseline regulatory requirements for academic standards through its governance structures, internal processes and procedures, adherence to the regulations of the awarding bodies and organisation, and engagement with the FHEQ. There are no specified improvements in this area, and no areas for development.

14 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)

15 There are robust monitoring and review procedures from course level upwards, including course annual reports and an overall higher education monitoring report. Performance is monitored through the committee structure. The College follows the awarding partners' procedures in relation to course committees and course annual reports. These committees and reports monitor quality and standards by examining key performance indicators, student and external examiner feedback.

16 The College has a HE Assessment Policy and Procedure that clearly sets out procedures and guidelines regarding assessment, including late submission, academic misconduct, mitigation, moderation and marking. This helps to ensure that fair and equitable assessment decisions are made. Students reported being clear regarding timing of assessment and assessment feedback.

17 The College makes good use of data in monitoring quality and standards through annual reports and its committee structures. These support the 2016-17 APR statement, which was considered at the Board of Governors, and reported that the College meets standards with no actions required.

18 The College has a structured student representative system and scheduled student-led meetings, and there is student representation on committees at all levels including the Corporation. Training is delivered in one-to-one sessions with the Assistant Director of Quality & Teaching Standards and HE Development, and the HE Quality and Curriculum Co-Ordinator.

19 The College makes good use of student feedback through both internal and external questionnaires and requires actions in response to feedback. The student submission states that problems are solved and that students feel that they are a priority, and this was reinforced in the meeting with students. There is evidence of the College responding to National Student Survey feedback with an action plan being put in place.

20 There are effective processes to ensure that sufficient learning resources are in place, and resources are both considered during programme approval and reviewed at the HE Committee, student focus groups and through the annual monitoring reviews. Students reported that requests for higher education specific resources had been acted upon and that resources met their needs.

21 Students also have access to support mechanisms both before and during their programme of study, including advice on finance, UCAS applications and general academic support. Students valued the support from tutors and support staff.

22 All staff delivering and assessing on higher education provision have to be approved by the relevant awarding body or awarding organisation thereby ensuring that all staff have appropriate qualifications.

23 The College operates both an Observation of Teaching and Learning and a Higher Education Peer Observation process for teaching observations. Staff reported to have found that the Peer Observation process is developmental for them. Peer observation reports are

reported to the Quality Office, and the Assistant Director for Quality & Teaching Standards & HE Development monitors to identify areas of good practice and development. The Annual HE Review includes a reflection on observations.

24 The College takes active measures to ensure that staff are competent in research, scholarship and pedagogy by actively promoting scholarly activity and research through a research fund to support an adjustment of teaching hours to undertake research. The College is an early adopter of the AoC Scholarship Framework and supports staff to achieve higher qualifications.

25 There is a comprehensive staff development handbook and a draft performance management policy. Staff are encouraged to participate in partnership development opportunities and two tutors are in the process of applying for fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. There is a mentoring process for members of staff new to the College, and a practice less structured than the formal mentoring whereby Programme Leaders support existing College staff who are new to higher education. The review team advises the College to further develop existing practices for supporting all tutors within the College in the delivery of higher education, identifying this as an **area for development**.

26 The College makes effective use of external examiners and has an External Examiner Reporting Policy. External examiner feedback and actions taken are monitored by a formal tracking document, and an External Moderation Termly Report, and are reported in the HE Quality Review.

27 The College's arrangements for working collaboratively with others are effective, and formal agreements underpin collaborative arrangements with partner awarding organisations. Links with local employers are used to inform curriculum planning and programme development. Students undertaking placements are supported by curriculum teams but are encouraged to source placements themselves. Curriculum teams visit new employers and all employers are made aware of the requirements for the placements. Risk assessments are standardised and undertaken according to the nature of employment and the risks presented. Employers play a part in formative assessments and provide reports on students.

28 The College monitors the fitness for purpose of its published information through a Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) checklist. The awarding bodies are responsible for definitive records of programmes. This is further addressed within the Consumer Protection Obligations section below.

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

29 The College's Board has adopted the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and adheres to the Eversheds model Code of Conduct for Governors. In line with these, the College is proactive in encouraging student involvement in academic governance. College policies and committees facilitate engagement with the student voice. The College's Academic Board and subcommittees, Board of Corporation, Quality Standards Committee, and Management meetings all draw on feedback from students or have student members. Students also play an active role in programme approvals panels.

30 Students are very clear about the way the College responds rapidly to any complaints they raise. The College has a Complaints and Compliments Policy to guide the process, and the Quality Standards Committee and Academic Board both undertake annual evaluations of this area. Staff mainly deal with complaints informally, but if necessary

students can escalate an issue through to programme team meetings or formal complaints procedures. The College addresses student complaints effectively, ensuring that student welfare is secured. The process is highly responsive because of the size of the College, but team meetings and student representative meetings ensure that staff are aware of, and consider, any potential underlying issues. The College meets the baseline regulatory requirements in both of these respects.

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

31 The College has a single Admissions Policy that details the processes for admission to both further and higher education programmes delivered at the College and is made available to potential applicants via the College website. The admissions process is supported via a College central admissions service. The admissions policy highlights the processes applicants need to undertake for admission to higher education programmes for both full and part-time courses. All full-time students are required to apply via UCAS; part-time students apply directly to the College via an online application form. When processing admissions decisions, reference is made to the advertised entry requirements for each programme; the relevant curriculum teams make the final admissions decision.

32 Students report that they were provided with all the relevant information required to decide on study at the College during the admissions process. The review team was advised in meetings with staff and students that this process is primarily by application and that the College interview is a supportive measure to provide any additional information to the applicants, and to support them in their transition to higher education. During the visit, the team heard from both students and staff that interviews were only used in specific cases, and were assured during meetings that all applicants, whether interviewed or not, receive all relevant information, including the RPL policy.

33 The Admissions Policy and the College website for higher education programmes both recognise interviews as a requirement, rather than as a supportive measure. The review team considers that the different sources of admissions advice would benefit from further consolidation, and therefore advises the College to evaluate the existing arrangements for student admissions to further improve the process, identifying this as an **area for development**.

34 Applicants who wish to appeal against an admissions decision are permitted to do so, and the process is articulated in the Admissions Policy.

35 The College provides prospective students with information about their programme via a prospectus and course information on the website. The College has processes in place to monitor the accuracy of published information and has made effective use of a matrix to track any changes required in light of CMA requirements. Students confirmed they had been provided with enough information to make informed decisions and were very satisfied with the level of support from College staff.

36 The awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for maintaining the definitive programme documentation. The College makes use of the standard programme specification templates provided by its awarding bodies - the University of Hull and the University of Huddersfield. The review team noted that the published programme specifications for programmes validated by the University of Hull were still in the format presented as part of the programme approval process and thus included guidance notes on how to populate the programme specification and stated 'application for validation'

throughout. The College confirmed that these were the approved versions of the programme specification and had accounted for any changes required as part of the validation processes.

37 For the awarding organisation, the College advised that the programme specifications were shared with the external verifiers for comment prior to publication, although the review team noted that there were a number of different approaches to the construction of these documents, providing varying levels of content to prospective students. The team considers that there is an opportunity to remove variation and standardise information in this respect, and therefore advises the College to review existing programme specifications to further support prospective students in making informed choices, identifying this as an **area for development**.

38 The Higher Education Terms and Conditions are published on the College's website for both the current and upcoming academic year, included with applicants' offer letters and made available in hard copy at enrolment. The Higher Education Terms and Conditions are considered annually by the HE Committee. Students confirmed that they were aware of the Terms and Conditions at each stage of the admissions and enrolment process and found these to be in a clear and accessible format.

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

39 The College has a single Compliments and Complaints Policy that encompasses its further and higher education provision, and a separate Academic Appeals Policy, which is available for students enrolled on higher education programmes. The College's complaints and appeals policies are accessible on the VLE and College website and referenced in the student handbook. These policies require complaints and appeals to be dealt with in a fair, proportional and timely manner with prescribed timelines for outcomes. The respective policies also confirm the confidential and independent manner in which complaints will be received and addressed.

40 The very small number of formal complaints received from students means that it is not possible for the College to enhance its provision systematically via the analysis of trends; however, the College does conduct an annual evaluation of complaints and compliments, which is considered by Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board.

41 The Compliments and Complaints Policy spans both further and higher education programmes, and makes clear that recourse to the awarding bodies is available. The review team was assured that the specific needs of higher education students were addressed by the policy. Students met by the team clearly articulated the initial informal process should a student wish to make a complaint and confirmed awareness of the College's formal complaints and appeals policies, including their location on the College VLE. Students were also aware of the option of recourse to the awarding bodies and organisation should internal processes be completed, and ultimately to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

42 The College has a Higher Education Programme Changes and Closure Policy, covering the arrangements for course closures and course changes. In relation to 'teach-out', the College advised the review team this had not happened to date, but that all students would be facilitated to complete their programmes. Students and staff confirmed that changes were made appropriately, and in consultation with students, for the following cohorts. While the policy outlines that students will be informed of changes to their

programme, the College acknowledged that it would benefit from further clarity regarding the methods by which this would be communicated.

43 The review team considered that the policy would benefit from a fuller inclusion of the methods of communication to be used, and therefore advises the College to update existing processes for communicating course changes and potential course closures to students and identifies this as an **area for development**.

44 The review team heard examples of the College supporting other higher education institutions where programmes had been closed by the respective institutions; in such instances, the College had offered an alternative programme for applicants to enrol on.

Rounded judgement

45 The College demonstrates through its governance structures and internal policies and procedures that it effectively meets all the baseline regulatory requirements in this respect. There are four areas for development where activity is already underway. These relate to further development of arrangements for supporting all staff in the delivery of higher education; further evaluation of student admission arrangements; review of existing programme specifications; and update of existing processes for communicating course changes and potential course closures. There are no specified improvements in this area.

46 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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