



Quality Review Visit of Eastleigh College

October 2017

Key findings

QAA's rounded judgements about Eastleigh College

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

- implement a more formal mechanism to monitor the accuracy and currency of general published information on its website (CMA)
- put in place arrangements for standardising the content of the programme pages on the virtual learning environment (CMA, Quality Code).

Specified improvements

The review team identified no **specified improvements** that relate to matters that are already putting, or have the potential to put, quality and/or standards at risk at Eastleigh College.

About this review

The review visit took place from 11 to 12 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
- Mr Gary Hargreaves
- Mr Harry Williams (student reviewer).

The overall aim of Quality Review Visit is to:

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

Quality Review Visit is designed to:

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

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

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

About Eastleigh College

Eastleigh College is a further education college specialising in technical and professional education and training based in Eastleigh in Hampshire. The College operates in Eastleigh Borough, which has a strong employer base and near full employment. The College has over 20,000 students of all age groups and offers a wide variety of modes of learning, including a significant number studying through apprenticeship schemes.

The College has almost 200 students studying on higher education programmes delivered in partnership with three awarding bodies and one awarding organisation. The College has offered counselling programmes validated by Buckinghamshire New University since 2013, and teacher training programmes delivered through a franchise arrangement with the University of Portsmouth since 2006. The College was approached by the University College of Estate Management (UCEM) to fund four degree apprenticeships, with the first cohort receiving funding in 2016. The College has some quality assurance responsibility for these degree apprenticeships. In addition, the College delivers four higher national programmes through a partnership with the awarding organisation Pearson.

Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

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

1 The review team confirms that the College has in place the documentation and arrangements to meet its awarding bodies' and organisation's requirements in relation to the FHEQ. Other reference points include Subject Benchmark Statements and Pearson Centre defined Programme Specifications. Pearson Centre defined Programme Specifications, while evident, require updating, for example to reflect the latest QAA benchmarks. This is recognised by the College as an area under review at the time of the visit.

2 The College is clear on its responsibilities regarding course approval and validation processes. The College has detailed examples and clear descriptions of its internal validation processes, and evidence of robust and rigorous documentation necessary to complete the formal validation requirements of its awarding partners. Validation processes include both the Universities' and Pearson Centre defined Programme Specifications that reflect the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points. More detail on the College's validation process can be found later in the report.

3 University programmes are well supported by the College for the planning and development of any new provision, and include robust consultation processes in support of the College's internal validation prior to the Universities' formalised validation processes. Internal validation and curriculum approval is led by the Higher Education Quality Board (HE Quality Board), supported by regular and effective programme area meetings and in collaboration with awarding body partner institutions. The validation process is enhanced by the range of College networks and partnerships that includes HE partners, neighbouring colleges and employers.

4 The College makes good and comprehensive use of external monitoring reports including those of QAA, Ofsted, HEFCE, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), and external examiner reports, for monitoring academic standards and ensuring that the academic standards of its programmes are comparable with those of other UK higher education providers. The College uses other comparable indicators with other higher education programmes, nationally, regionally and locally.

5 There is also a range of other data used by the College, including Teaching Excellence Framework metric data that is examined and used to plan, improve and inform academic standards. Staff have taken opportunities to inform their research and currency by attending events held by their university partners and the awarding organisation. There is documented evidence to support research and scholarly activities, which includes links and comparisons with other UK higher education providers, in the region through networking activities, through external examiner reports, and attending and presenting at events.

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

6 The College's governance arrangements are effective in maintaining oversight of academic governance. The Governing Body (Board) provides overall strategic leadership in line with the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges. The Board is composed of 13 independent members, two staff members and two student representatives who are mentored by the Clerk to the Board. There is a clear demarcation of responsibilities

between governance and management of academic standards.

7 The Board is collectively responsible for determining the educational character of the College by establishing the values and mission. The College Principal and Chief Executive is responsible for making proposals to the Board about the educational character of the College and for implementing policies and decisions. The Board's Standards Committee is responsible for advising the Board on curriculum and marketing strategies and policies and for monitoring the College's overall academic performance. The Standards Committee receives and recommends to the Board key College performance data monthly, including that of higher education provision, as well as the annual Higher Education Annual Report. The College's website contains very detailed, relevant information about the governance of the College. The Board reviews its own performance annually and receives annual reports from each of its committees.

8 The College and Governing Body, as an equal opportunity employer, enables academic staff and students to have academic freedom to put forward new ideas and opinions. This is demonstrated by the encouragement and funding of discipline-related staff development, such as conference attendance and higher degree registration.

9 The College and Governing Body respect the principle of collegiality by enabling members of staff to input their views directly or indirectly. The staff told the review team that they are consulted on the development, monitoring and decision making in relation to the College's higher education provision. This is achieved through staff representation on the Board and other deliberative committees, as well as regular meetings with higher education partner institutions.

10 The College has robust arrangements in place for maintaining oversight of academic risk, with an effective risk management process covering higher education. The College has a comprehensive Risk Register and Risk Reduction Plan. The Risk Management Board analyses all risks. The Board's Audit Committee reviews all key compliance and performance indices termly. The Risk Management Board reports to Governors through the Audit Committee. The Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Systems of Internal Control assesses the impact of the oversight of academic risk.

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

11 The College adheres to the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding partners. The College itself does not hold degree awarding powers; therefore, ultimate responsibility for programme design, development and approval lie with the College's awarding partners. This notwithstanding, the College encourages academic staff to propose new programmes and curriculum areas that align with the College's curriculum strategy.

12 The process for internal validation begins at programme area level, and feeds into the Senior Management Team and the College's Communication and Consultation Group (CCG) with final internal signing off by the Portfolio Review Panel. The internal validation process includes consultations with students and employers when considering new provision. For example, the relatively new HND in Computing was launched as a local progression route for level 3 learners.

13 Definitive documents for university awards are maintained by each university partner, and by the College for programmes leading to Pearson awards. These include the programme learning aims and outcomes, an outline programme structure, and indicative content, and represent the definitive reference point for the delivery and assessment of a programme. Modifications to programmes require external approval by the College's awarding partners following the completion of internal processes.

14 The College assesses students in accordance with the assessment policies, regulations and processes of its awarding partners, using a broad range of assessment methods to determine the length to which students achieve the set academic standards. Assessed work is standardised internally prior to external moderation by the College's awarding partner. Academic staff work with link tutors at partner institutions to ensure that assessment and feedback expectations of the College's awarding partners are met. Student progress is monitored through examination boards and reports are submitted by programme leaders.

15 The College engages in annual monitoring in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners. Internally, course leaders submit an end-of-semester report to the College's HE Quality Board for scrutiny and review. At the end of each academic year, course leaders then submit an end-of-year Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to the HE Quality Board. Externally, the College's awarding partners conduct monitoring visits and review activities in order to ensure that academic standards are met and maintained, although the latest one from the awarding organisation has been deferred.

16 External examiner reports confirm that the management of academic standards is effective, that assessment processes are appropriate and allow students to meet the programme and unit learning outcomes, and that the standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes of study in other UK institutions. Additionally, the College considers the requirements of professional bodies in the teaching and development of its professional programmes.

17 Suitable arrangements are in place for the provision of work placements, which are organised principally by the student concerned and the placement provider. Though the College does not have a formal handbook relating to placements, it does interview placement providers before they are approved and further requires the student, placement provider, and a representative of the College to sign a placement agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties. In relation to the specific agreement the College has with UCEM, whereby students register for degree apprenticeship programmes delivered at the University College, the College has in place satisfactory arrangements to assure itself of its responsibilities in relation to the academic standards of the programme and the student academic experience provided.

Rounded judgement

18 The review team considered the reliability of degree standards delivered at Eastleigh College and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers. It concludes that the provider's arrangements, working with its awarding partners, meet the threshold academic standards set out in the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. There is sufficient oversight of the College's higher education provision within its governance structures, and its arrangements for discharging its responsibilities in maintaining the academic standards of the qualifications it delivers are effective.

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

Judgement area: Quality of the student academic experience

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

20 Students are well represented and engaged at programme level, and are kept informed of higher education developments at both programme and College level, and through extensive feedback mechanisms including student voice and access to representation on formal committees, and through internal and external survey as well as regular informal feedback. There are opportunities to involve student representation in programme monitoring and approval. Although the College recognises that student attendance at the HE Quality Board is an area that presents challenges, overall students confirm that student representatives are successfully and consistently engaged.

21 The student body elects two Student Governors to represent students at the Board and its Committees. Although these representatives are not HE-specific, students confirmed that they feel they are well represented as a group across the College. The College notes that learner voice surveys are not HE-specific, although again the students reported that they have plenty of opportunities to express their views and valued the quality of teaching and student support. The College actively responds to student views on assessment, as noted below.

22 Admissions processes are robust and supported by a dedicated HE admissions administration member of staff. More details are found in subsequent sections of this report.

23 The College makes use of electronic assessment submissions via the virtual learning environment (VLE), although the Computing and Creative Media students use a separate site for uploading to accommodate large files. There is variability of general usage by programme teams. The College is aware of the inconsistencies of usage of the VLE and this is identified as an area for development later in the report.

24 Semester Review Meetings, with student representation, are held at course level to analyse assessment and exam results, teaching and learning reviews (teaching observation), student feedback, recruitment, retention, and reports and action plans from awarding bodies. These and other data are used to inform local programme SARs, which then feed into the wider College QIP.

25 The HE Quality Board plays a key role in monitoring and reviewing the student experience through data analysis, programme monitoring and the consideration of action plans. The College is responsive to student feedback. Programme Committees and the Student Forum are effective in receiving feedback from students and reporting back on developments. Student enrolment, retention, attendance and feedback are monitored via the HE Quality Board and reported to the Governors' Standards Committee. In addition, the College has a well-established Link Governor with a specific focus on higher education.

26 The student experience is aided by strong employer links, including in progression to employment, and with programme delivery and validation informed by well-developed employer forums. Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) reports confirm strong progression rates to work or further study enabled by the College's partnership network. The employment metrics for part-time higher education students are below benchmark. As noted elsewhere, the College monitors and uses data well, and the College explains the reason for this metric effectively, highlighting that a cohort of these students are mature and/or consider themselves 'active exhibiting artists', and therefore do not go on to employment as described in the metric measurement.

27 The College has a well-established Appeals Policy, freely available on its website, which directs students to internal and external routes. Similarly, the Complaints Procedure differentiates between informal and formal matters and clearly states the process for escalation both internally and externally. Complaints are logged and escalated as appropriate, and monitored and reported to Governors annually. Further details can be found in subsequent sections of this report.

28 All HE students are provided with entry requirements, course length, course content, attendance and work placement requirements. Work placement requirements are aided by an extensive employer network and membership of relevant professional bodies, for example British Association of Counselling Practitioners (BACP), and support from programme staff in order to meet the academic experience expectations of students.

29 Students value the quality of teaching and student support provided by the College. In addition, the College is responsive to staff development needs. The College provides financial support for staff who undertake short, medium or long-term study. The College has a strong and well-understood application and approval process for such funding.

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

30 The College encourages student involvement in its established governance arrangements. Students are represented at course level via elected student representatives who are invited to attend programme committee meetings. The College also has a Student Council and Students' Union. The Student Council is composed of non-sabbatical elected officers who are responsible for running campaigns based on current student needs. Though the College has a Students' Union, principally for both its further and higher education students, engagement with the student body has historically been low.

31 Student representatives are invited to attend College committees, including Programme Committee Meetings, and input to the College's SAR process, which ultimately lead to the production of programme, faculty, and department QIPs. Though the College does not have direct student representation at the HE Quality Board, it is making strides in this area towards fully embedding the learner voice. The College elects two student members to the Board of Governors and its subcommittees; both roles have explicit remits that include higher education. Training is provided by the Clerk to the Board and the NUS.

32 The College's management team receives a monthly report summarising compliments, complaints and outcomes via the College's Communication and Consultation Group (CCG), alongside the annual statement from the OIA detailing any action taken against the College. These reports are considered, trends identified, actions agreed, and the effectiveness of previous actions evaluated. These reports are summarised in the annual Higher Education Report submitted to the College's Board of Governors.

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

33 The College has established on its website a formal and systematic process for assuring the accuracy of specific programme information for prospective students through its Master Annual Programme (MAP) system. The accuracy of published information is a standing agenda item of the HE Quality Board. The Partnership Agreements clearly express marketing, recruitment and student admission responsibilities. The College is responsible for the admission of students for the programmes approved by Pearson and Buckingham New University, and has ultimate responsibility for admission to the UCEM apprenticeships.

UCEM undertakes the assessment of applicants' qualifications. The students on the University of Portsmouth approved programmes apply directly to University of Portsmouth through a link on the College's website.

34 The marketing team surveys the general College information on the website to ensure alignment with Competition and Markets Authority guidance, but there is no formal procedure. The review team found occasional inaccuracies within this information, for example an outdated job title in the Complaints Procedure. The review team concludes that the website aligns with consumer protection obligations. However, the team advises as an **area for development** that the College implements a more formal mechanism to monitor the accuracy and currency of general published information on its website, to assure itself that its consumer protection obligations are systematically met.

35 The College has effective arrangements to ensure that prospective students are given the information they need to make an informed decision. The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Advisor, assigned to each programme, the website and a professional courses prospectus give applicants details of programmes. A dedicated standard web page for each programme contains entry requirements, programme content, structure, learning and teaching approaches, assessment and the time commitment required. There are well-advertised HE open days and students indicate that they have an interview prior to being offered a place.

36 The College's Admission Policy, and the detailed higher education application page, ensure that the approach to admissions is effective and consistent. The website clearly describes the process for admitting and enrolling students, including the approach to equality and diversity, access to higher education, specific programme application forms and disability support. Trained and HE-specific admissions staff provide effective guidance to applicants on the process of application and admission. Students confirm that appropriate procedures are in place during admission and enrolment.

37 The terms and conditions are fair and transparent and easily accessible by students before, during and after the admissions and enrolment process. The offer letter is clear and unambiguous. The website contains terms and conditions of studying, with a dedicated HE section containing full and explicit pre-contract and financial information.

38 The information technology department reviews the VLE to monitor access by students, together with usage and uploading of teaching and supporting materials by the programme teaching staff. There is extensive programme-related information for students and staff on the VLE, which differs for each programme. There are student handbooks for each programme, with varying levels of detail. There is little standardisation of virtual materials for accuracy and completeness or minimum standards for content. The review team advises as an **area for development** that the College puts in place arrangements for standardising the content of the programme pages on the VLE and includes full Programme Specifications. This is to ensure that all students receive the clear, timely, accurate and comprehensive information consistently.

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 appropriate policies and procedures in place for student complaints and academic appeals, which are accessible, clear and fair. The College policies have specific sections targeted at students on higher education programmes. The

Complaints Procedure differentiates between informal and formal matters and states the process for escalation both internally and externally. The Complaints Procedure explains how, if a student's complaint remains unresolved, they can refer it to the OIA. The report of the OIA shows that no complaints were received against the College in 2015 and 2016. The Complaints Procedure and Appeals Policy can be located easily on the College website. Students comment that complaints are often dealt with informally and are handled appropriately.

40 The College states that it does not close courses with current students attending. In practice, if a programme does close then there would be liaison with partner institutions according to the Agreements. The annual curriculum planning cycle considers all programmes in relation to demand. If a programme is no longer available, the College seeks to signpost prospective students to alternative local provision. The New and Course Change form outlines all details required and ensures that details of the closure are clearly understood by all College departments and services. Minor changes to programmes are primarily communicated verbally via programme staff. Significant changes are communicated more formally by a member of the Senior Management Team.

41 Consultation occurs through course reviews and student representative groups. Students cite this as effective, identifying as an example that the counselling programme change of location was communicated in a transparent, clear and timely fashion and that they were aware of how the change was managed.

Rounded judgement

42 The review team considered the quality of the student academic experience at Eastleigh College, including student outcomes. The team concludes that the provider's arrangements, working with its awarding partners, meet the baseline regulatory requirements.

43 The review team advises as an area for development that the College puts in place a formalised mechanism to monitor general information on its website so as to assure itself of its consumer protection obligations. In addition, the review team advises as an area for development that the College makes arrangements to standardise the content made available on its VLE, in particular in relation to information at programme level.

44 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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