



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Edge Hotel School Ltd

March 2016

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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 Edge Hotel School Ltd. The review took place from 9 to 10 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Clive Turner (reviewer)
- Professor Tim Woods (reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Edge Hotel School Ltd and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<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
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has 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 of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) is on page 5 with numbered paragraphs starting on page 6.

In reviewing Edge Hotel School Ltd the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>4</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> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859).

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Edge Hotel School Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Edge Hotel School Ltd.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **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 is **commended**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Edge Hotel School Ltd.

- The bespoke admissions process that enables students to make appropriate and informed decisions about programme choice and leads to improved retention (Expectation B2).
- The collaborative relationship between the School and the Wivenhoe House Hotel, which produces a unique and stimulating learning environment for students (Expectations B3, B10 and Enhancement).
- The opportunities for students to network with industry experts and be exposed to professional practices, which have a demonstrably positive effect on student employability (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).
- The positive impact that timely and effective responses to the student voice have upon the students' learning environment (Expectations B5, B3 and B4).
- The strategic approach to the development and implementation of a wide range of initiatives, which informs and enhances the student learning experience (Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Edge Hotel School Ltd.

By July 2016:

- adhere to the approved processes for programme variation, however minor (Expectation B1).

By October 2016:

- formalise the internal procedure for the authorisation and design of new programmes (Expectation B1).

### Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to develop a formal staff development policy (Expectation B3).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

At Edge Hotel School Ltd (the School), student employability is a central aspect of its offering. All aspects of the course programme and its delivery have been devised to produce students with a strong commercial hospitality education, from the very first point of admission to completion. This is echoed in the School's mission statement and it takes pride in its ethos of professionalism instilled in students.

The School's unique selling point is a hospitality qualification that includes work experience within a live four-star hotel, Wivenhoe House Hotel. Its graduates gain extensive operational, supervisory and managerial experience across all three levels of their degree.

The School offers a variety of settings and activities focused on promoting and encouraging professional development and career networking. Its employability is demonstrably a strong and unique element of the School's experience.

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

Edge Hotel School Ltd has satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

## **About Edge Hotel School Ltd**

The School was first established in 2011 under a collaborative arrangement between the University of Essex (the University), Kaplan Open Learning (KOL) and the Edge Foundation. The Edge Foundation is 'an independent education charity dedicated to raising the status of technical, practical and vocational learning in the UK'. Academic programmes, validated by the University, were offered by KOL and delivered through the School. In 2013, following the conclusion of the agreement between KOL and the University, the School underwent a separate validation event with the University and established itself as Edge Hotel School Ltd.

The School occupies a site on the edge of the University of Essex Colchester campus, neighbouring the Wivenhoe House Hotel (the Hotel) and offers a Foundation Degree and Bachelor of Arts Degree in Hotel Management. These awards are offered as full-time, intensively delivered programmes validated by the University of Essex. Students are able to complete the foundation award in 16 months and the BA award is offered as a two-year programme.

The School's first student intake was in June 2012 and as of December 2015 there were 110 students registered, comprising 89 per cent from the UK (11 per cent from the European Union), 62 per cent of whom are female, with 32 per cent of its student body being over the age of 21 years and 46 per cent of its student body presenting with an A-Level entry profile (a further 36 per cent of students enrolled with BTEC qualifications or National Vocational Qualification backgrounds).

The School's aim is to 'provide students with professional and managerial skills, as well as the academic theory, to prepare them for a future career as a leader in the industry'. It supports this aim through provision that is delivered in a practice-based learning

environment with the four-starred Wivenhoe House Hotel. Students experience a 'highly intensive and industry focused programme which aims to develop both a professional work ethic as well as an academically rigorous understanding of the hospitality industry'. It follows then that the relationship between the different parties involved in the delivery and maintenance of the academic experience is of 'fundamental importance'. The School describes its relationship with the Hotel as 'symbiotic' and one that 'the management and staff of both organisations have (and will continue to) invest considerable time and effort into developing'. In January 2015, the School gained accreditation from the Institute of Hospitality, a professional body of the hospitality industry, offering the opportunity for graduating students to apply for membership of the Institute.

While this QAA review is the School's first formal review, the School was included in the QAA Review for Educational Oversight of Kaplan Open Learning in November 2013. Additionally, the School formed part of the University of Essex institutional review of its partnership with KOL in January 2013.

Since the School was established as a separate entity with charitable trust status, the School, Wivenhoe House Hotel and the Edge Foundation have sought to strengthen their oversight and enhancement of academic delivery. The deliberative committee structure includes representation of the University, the Hotel and the Edge Foundation, with reciprocal arrangements for the Principal of the School to sit on the Wivenhoe House Hotel Board.

There have also been updates made to academic programmes and changes to the senior management structure at the School. The current Principal took up post in 2014 and additional posts have been created, such as the Student Services Officer and a Training and Development Practitioner to support the student learning experience in the School, the Hotel and the University. The School and its students benefit from access to central University services and resources, including academic delivery space and learning resources.

The School recognises that its key challenge is to grow its student numbers so that it remains sustainable. Through its deliberative and business committee structures there are mechanisms in place to enable its future growth, including a retention plan that outlines how it will build its capacity and sustain student learning opportunities.

## Explanation of the findings about Edge Hotel School Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

# **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies**

**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 School delivers its programmes in a hybrid model with the University. The collaborative arrangement falls under the definition by the Higher Education Funding Council for England of a 'sub-contractual arrangement' (previously 'franchise arrangement') for the purposes of student reporting. The School is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students, and students are registered with the University and included in the University's statutory returns. In relation to course design and delivery, the arrangement is described as 'validation', that is, the School designs and develops the programmes and these are then validated (approved) by the University for delivery by the School. The main duties and responsibilities of each organisation is set out in a responsibilities checklist.

1.2 The School is also overseen by the charitable trust, the Edge Foundation. Its School Board, which meets quarterly, and membership and Terms of Reference are laid out. The governance protocols are to oversee the charitable status of the School and its objects.

1.3 The School aligns its academic standards through the University validation, approval and enhancement processes, to the FHEQ, the Quality Code, and the *Subject Benchmark Statement for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (HLST)*.

1.4 The arrangements in place for the maintenance of academic standards of awards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team examined a series of documentary evidence pertaining to the School's collaborative agreement with the University, its governance arrangements and procedures for programme approval and programme specifications. The team also met senior managers and academic and professional staff from the School, as well as representatives from the University's registry and partnership teams.

1.6 The reporting mechanisms of the School committee structure and different memberships is clear, identifying the relationships between the University, the School, the Edge Foundation and the Hotel. A further Wivenhoe House Board meets quarterly, and the organisational heads of both the School and the Hotel sit on each other's boards in order to facilitate closer working relationships between the School and Hotel. A service level agreement is in place to manage the relationship between the School and the Hotel and the School Board looks after the Risk Register, which clearly sets out responsibilities and mitigatory actions. Additionally, the Faculty Board meets annually and there is a proposal to make this a biannual meeting to assist in the review and implementation of strategic enhancement and planning.

1.7 The School benchmarks its provision against several professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), accreditation bodies and professional organisations, to ensure that its provision meets industry standards. These include the Institute of Hospitality, the Council for Hospitality Management Education, and the European Hotel Schools Federation.

1.8 The course outline demonstrates a range of modules that match the requirements of the HLST Subject Benchmark components for hospitality. The programmes cover the principal characteristics of foundation and undergraduate degrees, with employer engagement, articulation and progression, accessibility, partnership, flexibility and elements relating to academic standards. Consideration and cognisance of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics is undertaken through the University validation, approval and enhancement processes.

1.9 The programme specifications are defined, with clear learning outcomes for each level of the programme. At Level 4, the focus is on understanding, at Level 5 on supervising, and at Level 6 on managing, with each level requiring the completion of 120 credits in 15 and 30 credit modules.

1.10 The review team found that, based on the evidence provided and from meetings with staff, the School has in place policies and procedures to maintain academic standards and ensure that programmes are aligned appropriately. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

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

**Findings**

1.11 The School follows the University requirements in order to secure academic standards. Rules of assessment are reviewed annually and all School staff are briefed on any changes to the rules via the 'summary of academic policy decisions'. Regular briefing documents issued by the University keep School staff up to date with key changes. Guidance on undergraduate exam boards is issued by the University and minutes of exam boards are maintained.

1.12 The arrangements in place to secure academic standards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team considered the School's documentation including evidence of programme regulations, variations to programme and module content and rules of assessment, governance arrangements and procedures for programme approval and programme specifications. The team also met senior managers, academic and professional staff and students from the School together with representatives from the University.

1.14 The School uses the University regulations with approved customisation (for example appeals and assessment) to allow for the industry context 'nuances' of the programmes. One such nuance is the two-year compressed delivery of the Bachelor of Arts programme which does not map onto the usual university undergraduate examination pattern. There is a clear process for requesting such variations from the University committee. Requests for changes are initiated by School Committee discussion, such as the Programme Committee, and the minutes demonstrate consideration of programme changes to be recommended to the University Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships.

1.15 Guidance on Undergraduate Exam Boards issued by the University provides comprehensive detail on the classification rules and progression criteria, and notes approved variations. This is reflected in minutes of exam boards that record clear actions, decisions and appropriate referrals. The University-wide policy on Marking of Coursework and Examination Procedures and its Rules of Assessment for Student Progression are published on the University website.

1.16 The exam board is chaired by the University's Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships, and the board comprises at least two members of the School academic staff. The process for generating School marks rests on a clear process administered by the Senior Administrator, the Academic Operations Manager and the Vice Principal (Academic). The School has its own appeals procedure that has been validated by the University and reports are monitored by the University Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee, newly renamed the Operations Group.

1.17 There is an identified process for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), although the School's documentation makes clear that this process has not yet been put into practice.

1.18 The organisational structure of the School demonstrates a distinct line of reporting from the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) to the University Partnership Education

Committee, and it is apparent from the University structures that the academic body with ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the consistency of frameworks is the University Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group (newly renamed the Operational Group).

1.19 The review team concludes that there are comprehensive arrangements in place for the maintenance of academic standards and evidence to demonstrate that the School complies with the University requirements, allowing the Expectation to be met with an associated low level of risk.

**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**

1.20 As a requirement of the University, the School must provide a specification for each programme, which acts as the definitive record of the course. The programme specification lays out all the requisite information regarding the course. This is accompanied by a module map that plots each module at each level against learning outcomes and key skills. The module map demonstrates how the content and structure of the programme and its assessment strategy provide students with the opportunities to meet the learning outcomes at the requisite level of the course.

1.21 The procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22 In order to test whether the Expectation is met, the review team examined School programme and approval documentation and met senior managers, academic and professional staff from the School, as well as representatives from the University.

1.23 Programme specifications are available on the School website, accessible to prospective students, and additionally on the virtual learning environment (VLE) for students.

1.24 Any changes to the programme specification and any updates, are submitted to the University via a clear-cut process, administered via a course variation process. However, the review team found one instance of an ad hoc change to a module's assessment word length requirement that had occurred before informing the University. It was clear from the evidence provided that this was an unusual example since the process for course variation is well understood and followed. Nevertheless, the review team considers that such instances of operational procedure needed to be carefully monitored, which leads to a recommendation being made under Expectation B1.

1.25 The team concludes that School procedures provide for a definitive record of programmes and modules with a well defined process in place for revisions and that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

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

**Findings**

1.26 The School offers two higher education programmes, a foundation degree and a Bachelor of Arts top-up under a collaborative agreement with the University. The School is subject to the two-stage University programme approval process, which is published on the University's website. The University procedures for design and approval require specific reference to the Quality Code, the FHEQ and other external reference points (for example PSRB requirements) to ensure that academic standards are set at the correct level and meet the University framework for awards. The University Validation Panel makes a formal recommendation to its Partnerships Education Committee and includes representation from academic and professional external members selected by the University. The University sets down procedures for modifications or variations to its approved programmes, which the School is required to follow.

1.27 The procedures in place for programme approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.28 The team scrutinised School programme and approval documentation and met senior managers, academic and professional staff from the School, as well as representatives from the University, in order to determine the extent to which the School's arrangements meet the Expectation.

1.29 The University maintains a high level of control on the approval process and any divergences from standard guidance. The School's agreement with the University specifies that the approval of new and revised programmes and the conformity with UK academic standards is assured by the School's compliance.

1.30 The School does not presently have its own formalised internal procedures for authorising the development work that might lead to the preparation of a proposal for a new programme. There is a reference to a plan to develop a new events management pathway in the minutes of the most recent Principal's report to the February meeting of the School Board, although this development has been put on hold by both the School and the University for the time being. The School acknowledges that this development would be beneficial.

1.31 Where variations occur to the programme and modules, these are subject to the University approval process. Examination of the evidence showed that proposals for variation had been made and approved, including variation to undergraduate rules of assessment, a presentation relating to the approved variations to the teaching model, a rationale for the variation in programme credits, and a summary of the variations that have been approved since the School's programmes' previous validation or periodic review.

1.32 The team was made aware of a variation that was approved by a senior manager but which had not yet gone through the formal procedure and this gave rise to a recommendation under Expectation B1.

1.33 The review team concludes that the procedures in place for programme approval and variation meet the Expectation 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**

1.34 The School delivers its higher education programmes in accordance with the regulatory frameworks for the award of credit set down in the University of Essex regulations. The School adheres to the University-wide policy on marking and examination, which is published on the University's website. This procedure is updated annually and changes are communicated to all staff. The School maintains records of student achievement and produces a final transcript in a format approved by the University, in accordance with outcomes from the University's exam boards. The University provides annual training on processes and policies associated with examinations.

1.35 The arrangements in place at the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36 The review team examined a series of documentary evidence including the School's Teaching and Learning Strategy, its academic regulations and approved variations, records affirming assessment outcomes and external examiner reports. The team also met senior managers and academic and professional support staff in order to test its arrangements for assessment.

1.37 Where variation to the School's Undergraduate Rules of Assessment apply, these are approved by the University and permit the School to reflect nuances in its operational delivery and aspects of its assessment practice. Programme learning outcomes are mapped to modules to show where outcomes are met and demonstrated through the module map and additionally published in the programme specification.

1.38 The School delivers teaching, learning and assessment in accordance with its published Learning and Teaching Strategy. The internal moderation process is used by the School to ensure fairness and consistency in the marking of students' assessed work.

1.39 The University appoints an external examiner, who may be nominated by the School, to ensure that the assessment and award of credit is made in accordance with the University regulations and to maintain UK academic threshold standards.

1.40 The School undertakes its assessment process, including the operation of exam boards, in accordance with the University-approved regulations and this is confirmed by minutes of exam boards, reports from external examiners, and meetings with academic and professional staff. The external examiner describes the internal verification system as a model of good practice.

1.41 Exam boards are chaired by the Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships at the University. The minutes of exam boards show that the external examiner provides full and constructive commentary on the assessment process and the conduct of the boards, both at the board and in some cases prior. Although the minutes are not always consistently dated

(usually the year is missing, and they omit a full attendance list and apologies for absence), they do show that the boards are properly conducted and ensure that credit is awarded only where assessment has confirmed achievement of learning outcomes, that results are properly considered, that academic decisions regarding the award of credit are properly recorded and that the appropriate academic standards have been met. The team heard confirmation of this from its meetings with senior managers and representatives of the University. External examiners provide interim reports in addition to their annual report, which allows for constant attention to the achievement of standards. External examiners' observations are additionally recorded in the Undergraduate Examiners' Board Minutes.

1.42 A sample student transcript confirms that clear and robust records of student achievement are maintained, and the review team heard that records are double checked before submission is made to the University exam board.

1.43 The review team concludes that the procedures in place for the award of credit and qualifications accord with the governing regulations and that records are properly kept. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.44 The School is subject to the University's monitoring and review processes. This consists of the annual review of courses (ARC) and periodic review of courses; the School is subject to institutional Periodic Review in 2016. The University provides guidance through its website and in meetings of the Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee.

1.45 The design of the procedures that are in place at the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.46 The team considered external examiners' reports, documentation relating to course variation, records of academic team meetings, the annual review of courses and minutes of meetings from its deliberative committees. The review team also discussed the School's procedures with senior managers and academic and professional staff.

1.47 The guidance provided by the University is comprehensive and the pro forma for the annual report describes the internal information sources required. This includes consideration of outcomes from the National Student Survey (NSS), internal student satisfaction surveys, module evaluations, recruitment, retention and achievement data and feedback from the SSLC and Programme Committee.

1.48 The School also reviews its range of courses against a University benchmark group of similar courses from across the UK in order to ensure that its provision meets University and sector standards.

1.49 The evidence provided by the School demonstrates that these and other information sources are produced, analysed and considered by its committee structure, with records of minutes, reports and action plans maintained to confirm adherence to the University requirements, and programmes monitored and reviewed accordingly. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

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

**Findings**

1.50 The School follows the processes prescribed by the University of Essex for programme approval, monitoring and review. The process includes external expertise in the form of subject academics and industry practitioners at validation and review stages. Academic standards on programmes are monitored through the School's deliberative committee structure, its internal verification process and the University-led exam boards and external examination process.

1.51 The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.52 The team tested the Expectation by examining institutional and programme validation reports, programme specifications, external examiner reports and records of meetings regarding the annual review of courses and its deliberative committee oversight. The review team also met senior managers, academic and professional staff and students.

1.53 The School adheres to the University procedure for external examiners, published on its website. There is a clear system of external examination with interim reports and an annual report. External examiner observations are recorded in the Board of Examiners' minutes and the School considers reports and feedback received in the Programme Committee, where actions and responses are logged and monitored. The School notifies changes to courses to external examiners in order to support the approval procedure.

1.54 The School uses a range of external professionals who, through workshops and guest lectures, offer current management and operational insights into the hospitality sector, thereby enhancing student learning opportunities. The effective operation between the School and the Hotel, underpinned by its governance structure, establishes a real-work environment for students to develop and test their skills and knowledge of the hospitality industry.

1.55 The School underwent an evaluation by the Institute of Hospitality in order to assess the extent to which its provision met the professional standards set by the professional body and thereby secure advance standing for its graduates; this was awarded in January 2015.

1.56 The review team concludes that the School makes scrupulous use of external and independent expertise in order to assure the maintenance of academic standards and finds that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies: Summary of findings

1.57 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.58 Responsibility for the setting of academic standards rests with the University of Essex as the sole awarding body for the School's higher education provision. The School's responsibilities for maintaining the academic standards of those qualifications are set out in its Responsibilities Checklist and the School has in place processes and procedures to discharge its responsibilities accordingly. For matters under academic standards the School is required to adhere to the procedures of its awarding body, and there is evidence of oversight maintained through the University.

1.59 All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low.

1.60 There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this section.

1.61 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding body **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 School delivers its programmes under the terms of a collaborative agreement with the University. In the agreement the arrangements for course design and delivery are described as 'validation', that is, the School designs and develops the programmes and these are then validated (approved) by the University for delivery by the School. The agreement prescribes that the University regulations will apply to all its validated programmes, the exception being a separate School policy and procedure for academic appeals and complaints, approved by the University.

2.2 The processes for programme design, development and approval are laid out on the University website. The University oversees all programme proposals and runs formal approval processes to validate new courses. Any changes to programmes also require formal approval by the University.

2.3 The arrangements in place for the design, development and approval of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The team considered documentary evidence including programme documentation and records of approved variations. The team tested staff understanding and School compliance with the procedures in meetings with senior managers and academic and professional staff.

2.5 From the examination of documentary evidence and after discussions with staff, the review team confirmed that the School's arrangements for approval and variation to programmes are clearly understood and applied. The School will initially propose changes to its programmes through discussions with students in the SSLC and then forward its proposals to the Programme Committee, and thence to the University approval process. The University has approved customisation proposals, including alterations to the assessment regulations for School programmes.

2.6 However, in noting the School's procedures for programme variation, the review team found one instance of an ad hoc change made to a module's assessment word-length requirement that had occurred without informing the University. It was clear from the evidence provided that this was an unusual example since the process for course variation is well understood and followed. Such instances of operational procedure needed to be carefully monitored, by continuing to observe the University procedure. The team **recommends** therefore that the School takes steps to ensure that it adheres to the approved processes of programme variation, however minor.

2.7 The School has produced a Curriculum Review Plan that outlines its plans to refresh the curriculum until 2016-17 as part of its regular review of its provision. It does not presently have its own formalised internal procedures for authorising the development work that might lead to the preparation and design of a proposal for a new programme, though the School accepts that this is an area for development. The review team found references in

the December 2015 minutes of the meeting for the Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group, and in the most recent Principal's report to the February meeting of the School Board, for a proposal to develop a new events management pathway. While documentary evidence and discussion with senior management of the School indicate this development has been put on hold by both the School and the University for the time being, the review team **recommends** that the School formalises the internal procedure for the authorisation and design of new programmes.

2.8 The review team concludes that the School can demonstrate compliance with the University procedures for the design and approval of new programmes and for variation in existing programmes. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk 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**

2.9 The collaboration agreement between the University and the School delegates responsibility for recruitment and admissions to the School. Its procedure for the recruitment and admission of students sets out each and every aspect of the marketing and admissions processes, covering the generation of publicity material and institutional responsibilities, running visiting days, and making decisions on borderline applicants. The School has a process in place for all students wishing to progress from the foundation degree to the Bachelor of Arts degree programme.

2.10 The procedures in place for the recruitment and admission of students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team tested the extent to which the Expectation is met through scrutinising admissions, recruitment and marketing material and meeting senior managers at the School and the Hotel and representatives from the Edge Foundation and the University. The team additionally met academic and professional staff from the School and Hotel, as well as students.

2.12 The School regards itself as 'unique within the UK HE Education market'. The School seeks to capitalise on this unique selling point and its two-year programme, and seeks to brand itself accordingly in publicity material and at recruitment events. The University agents aid the School's marketing in Europe, and the team heard about the School's plans to employ its own agents.

2.13 Recruitment is seen as one of the current biggest challenges faced by the School and one of its principal strategic aims is to increase retention and recruitment. The School has developed a Retention Plan, and has a clear Marketing Plan for January 2016, which outlines various recruitment strategies by time and mode for different entry cohorts.

2.14 The basic recruitment strategy for the School has established a current maximum recruitment target of 200, based on operational capacity with the Hotel, and the main market is UK applicants with some attention to EU applicants. There is no strategic plan to enter into the international market as the School does not hold a Tier 4 licence.

2.15 The School continually reviews its procedures (last reviewed in August 2012) and variations to the standard admissions procedure have been centrally approved by the University, including the removal of the standard admissions interview.

2.16 Emphasis falls on fairness of process, consistency and speediness of reply, and providing answers to all prospective students' questions. It appears to be considerate and timely, transparent in its communication with applicants, and thorough in checking applicants' qualifications. Applicants are invited to Applicant Days although most applicants are now given an information briefing by telephone, a process that has proven successful with prospective students and which facilitates a smoother recruitment process within the

School. Typically, applicants who fall just short of the standard offer are invited for the 'exceptional' interview. This interview is carried out by academic staff and the outcome is fed into the decision-making process. The review team heard that students are very satisfied with what they feel to have been an excellent admissions experience, and that their experience post-admission has borne out the information they were given beforehand.

2.17 Any changes to the programme that might affect current applicants are communicated to all applicants on an individual basis, which the review team regarded as an element of good institutional practice. Indeed, the bespoke admissions process that enables students to make appropriate and informed decisions about programme choice and leads to improved retention to be **good practice**.

2.18 The review team concludes that the arrangements in place for the recruitment and admission of prospective students to the School is fair, accessible and reliable and supports students; therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

**Findings**

2.19 Prior to its establishment as a separate entity in 2013, the School operated under an arrangement with Kaplan Open Learning (KOL). In November 2013 the School, then called Edge Hotel School, was included in the QAA Review for Educational Oversight of Kaplan Open Learning, for which an action plan was devised enjoining the School to develop a Learning and Teaching Strategy that was aligned with the strategy of the University. Oversight of the development of learning and teaching is undertaken by the School's annual Faculty Board and the University's Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee.

2.20 The arrangements in place at the School would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21 The review team scrutinised a series of documentary evidence pertaining to the development of learning and teaching, including Faculty Board minutes, Programme Committee minutes, and minutes of academic meetings, and met senior managers, academic and professional staff and students from the School. The team also met senior managers and staff from the Hotel and representatives from the University.

2.22 The School's Learning and Teaching Strategy outlines its aims and objectives for achieving the learning and teaching aspirations for all students, and the key projects that the School aims to support in reaching those objectives. The strategy embraces four themes: Empowering students through knowledge, qualities and skills; Enhancing resources and support for learning; Engaging students in a high-quality learning experience; and Enabling staff innovation and excellence. A synopsis of the ethos of the School's strategy is published in the Student Handbook and on the VLE. Progress of actions in relation to the Learning and Teaching Strategy is monitored and reported on through the School's Programme Committee and the School Board.

2.23 A Staff Development Policy is embedded as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This has been drafted and submitted for approval and is on track for commencing in September 2016. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to develop a formal staff development policy.

2.24 As part of the School's ongoing staff development activity, peer observation of teaching occurs. The outcomes of this process are transparently recorded and the review team heard that the process is felt to be helpful for sharing good practice and supporting staff development.

2.25 The module map outlines how and where each learning outcome is met. Assessment is then matched to the appropriate learning outcomes for a given module. The review team heard from students who confirmed that they know how to find and how to use this information to assist them with their learning.

2.26 Students graduating from the Bachelor of Arts programme gain extensive operational, supervisory and managerial experience across all three levels of their degree. The student submission to this review indicates that there is progression in assignments as levels progress, but there is some disquiet among students about Level 5 assignment briefs being too vague, 'which leads to a large variation in grades amongst several individuals'. Furthermore, there is a suggestion that there is a lack of consistency in marking between different lecturers and that owing to this lack of clarity in the brief and lack of consistency in marking, 'When we are preparing an assignment we need to take account of who is marking it'. The student submission also makes reference to the relevance of what is taught, especially the balance between theoretical and academic work and practical work; the difficulty in managing the bunching of assessment deadlines; and the erratic timing of feedback, although the quality is by and large acknowledged to be good. However, from the meeting with students and subsequent evidence provided, it was clear to the review team that students feel that the School has taken significant steps to address their concerns through deliberate actions and other innovative practices and liaisons with the Hotel.

2.27 Such deliberate actions include the School's effort to address inconsistent marking practices through events like the Marking Consistency Event and amendments to its current procedures. In addition, the School has systematically sought to address the issues raised by the students in a range of consultations with SSLC, a forum that is led by students and which includes senior representation from the Hotel. These remedies include the training of Hotel staff and their expectations of students, the earlier clarification of work placement rotas, overtime commitments of students, the relevance of theoretical and practical teaching, and the bunching of assignments.

2.28 Regular curriculum reviews occur; the School is currently undertaking one to ensure that all teaching quality is aligned with University standards. One of the School's aims is to embed research-led teaching and to ensure that all students have an opportunity to undertake a significant project; this is achieved through the Consultancy Project. The Consultancy Project Handbook lays out all the requirements for the module, giving clear direction to students on all aspects of the planning, development, delivery and assessment of the module. The review team heard from Level 6 students about their experience of the module and the impact this had on their professional practice.

2.29 Best practice is additionally derived from external examiner reports, staff who are themselves external examiners, and attendance at professional conferences and events. Industry professionals are also regularly invited to run training sessions for students.

2.30 Further regular review is undertaken in the ARC which is used as the principal annual reflective exercise by the University, drawing upon a range of data and sources. These lead to action plans that are monitored on a regular basis, with a biannual update to the University, as well as items placed on the School's own action plan. The School ARC is monitored and overseen by the University Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee and the University's Partnerships Management Committee.

2.31 An annual appraisal system to identify continuing professional development (CPD) requirements is in place, and a budget is in place to support regular staff CPD engagements. Internally, best practice is shared through peer review and fortnightly academic meetings. A programme of staff training for Hotel staff is in place, including an induction for Heads of Departments and a Train the Trainer course leading to a certificate for senior staff at the Hotel.

2.32 Considerable effort has gone into facilitating closer working understandings between the Wivenhoe House Hotel staff, the School and the School's students. CPD training is regularly available to Hotel staff, as well as School academic staff attending the



Hotel's daily routines to witness student engagement and maintain industry insight. Hotel staff worked with the School's academic team to devise Professional Competency Reports (PCRs) for each level of the programme as a guideline to both students and Hotel staff on the standards to be achieved while students work in the Hotel. The initiative of the PCRs is widely commended by students. The review team heard that the engagement of hotel staff is incorporated in the Hotel job descriptions and that students sit on its recruitment panels.

2.33 Learning resources are praised by the students, as is the School's VLE, library and library stock. The collaborative agreement with the University also grants students access to its shared central services.

2.34 Students also praise the School's student consultation procedures, either through meetings or through the student representative system. The student voice is engaged effectively at most operational levels, and while invited to the strategic senior Faculty Board, student representation is not formalised in its Terms of Reference. The review team found the School's timely and effective responses to the student voice to be a feature of good practice under Expectation B5.

2.35 A clear orientation programme occurs in the students' first two weeks on programme. The Student Handbook is made available in paper and electronic format at point of offer and then registration and module guides with all relevant module information are made available on the VLE. All students are assigned a mentor and there is a clear student support rota for academic or pastoral support. While students highly praise the student support staff, student qualms about the mentor system have meant that they tend to go to staff they know rather than their mentors, although students said that they value mentors for their advice in negotiating the different level aspects of their programme.

2.36 The collaborative relationship between the School and the Hotel, which produces a unique and stimulating learning environment for students, is **good practice**. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.37 The School's documentation indicates pride in its approach to 'industry engaged education' providing a 'work-ready' programme for students and stressing professionalism as its watchword. Students' experience and opportunities are monitored through the SSLC and through the analysis of induction surveys. The Student Feedback Policy and the student submission indicate that students are able to feed back their views in a survey, and the surveys are also used to monitor the extent to which components of the course contribute to the achievement of the School's aim. These surveys mirror the NSS and occur in the final month of the cohort's level and are analysed twice a year (February and July). Summaries of each level are produced and the data and free comments are analysed and fed through to the Faculty Board and the Hotel's Head of Departments' meetings. They also go back to the SSLC and form part of the Performance Statistics Poster. The University's ARC reviews all student survey feedback, which is in turn considered by the University Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee and the University's Partnerships Management Committee.

2.38 The procedures in place to monitor and evaluate student development and achievement would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39 The review team considered a series of documentary evidence in order to assess the extent to which the Expectation is met, including minutes of its deliberative committees including the SSLC and Faculty Board, annual review of courses, student induction process and the outcomes and analyses of module survey results. The team also met senior managers, academic and professional staff and students from the School, as well as representatives from the University and the Hotel.

2.40 The School provides support for specific learning difficulties through the Student Services Officer and through support from the University's Student Service. Student progress and support is tracked through the School's fortnightly academic meetings. Students singled out the roles of the School's Student Support Services Officer and the Training and Development Practitioner for their particularly student-centred assistance. The review team heard that the School is also funding the training development of staff from both the School and the Hotel with mental health awareness training so as to support students while working in the Hotel. The roles and responsibilities of staff within School are publicised in the Student Handbook. Other resources for support, information, and learning support available to students at the School and the University are also outlined in the Collaboration Agreement.

2.41 The School is committed to enabling students to undertake academic study alongside appropriate real-life work experience, as the strapline to their letters to applicants makes clear. The School delivers a course that inculcates a strong work ethic and occupational knowledge, including clear protocols for professional appearance and behaviour. Evidence for this exists in the work-based learning outcome expectation, the Professional Code of Conduct, the PCRs, with relevant training for this occurring in the PPD Career Development Portfolio and Reflective Journal. Students demonstrated a sharp appreciation of this aspect of the provision and recognised 'professionalism' as the key mantra of their learning experience.

2.42 Careers education is embedded within the curriculum as part of the personal and development modules. Students told the review team that employability is embedded within the curriculum, although they would like routes to employment other than the big chains being considered, as well as time to attend the University's more general Careers Fair for non-hospitality employment prospects. Nonetheless, students strongly approve of the support that they are given for work placements outside the Hotel arrangement.

2.43 In 2015 the School gained accreditation with the Institute of Hospitality, enabling its graduates to apply for membership with advanced standing. Additional links and exposure to other hospitality organisations and companies, such as the Master Innholders and Exclusive Hotels, give students high quality access to professional opportunities.

2.44 With employers engaged in professional workshops, alumni engaged in networking events, and a strong ethos of work readiness (the 'Edge knack' as students term it), the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education statistics indicate a high level of success (91.7 per cent) in employability and careers training. The review team heard that School students are granted access to high profile industry conferences, such as the General Manager's Conference, where they work alongside professionals in order to gain further insights into different industry contexts. Students are provided with business cards in order to assist with networking. The opportunity for students to network with industry experts and be exposed to professional practices, which has a demonstrably positive effect on students' employability, is **good practice**.

2.45 The first set of NSS results has been disappointing and the review team heard that this has been partly due to a particularly disaffected cohort, which experienced a turbulent period as the School's provision and the Wivenhoe House Hotel were being established. The results also reflected comparatively low retention statistics for this period. The School responded with the development of a retention plan, and a review of the marketing terminology and website. Close attention to the student surveys also feeds into the analysis and the review team heard that student satisfaction forms part of the Hotel's key performance indicators. The review team found the School's responses to the student voice to have a positive impact on the learning environment and to be a feature of good practice under Expectation B5.

2.46 As outlined in Expectation B3, student resources and learning environments are effective in supporting student learning opportunity and students are positive about their access to resources, library books and e-resources.

2.47 The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.48 The School has a policy on student feedback, which lists all forms of feedback and the ways in which it is considered. The School encourages and promotes student engagement through its Student Charter. The opportunities for student engagement are clearly set out in the Student Handbook and are described during induction. The School's deliberative committee structure provides for student representation on the SSLC and the Programme Committee and students are consulted on proposals for change.

2.49 The arrangements in place to engage all students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team scrutinised a range of documentary evidence including the Student Feedback Policy, the Student Representative Policy, Terms of Reference and records of meetings for its deliberative committees, including the Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group and the University of Essex's Partnership Management Committee, student surveys and student engagement in the proposal for a variation of the rules on assessment. The review team also met a range of senior managers, academic and professional staff, students from the School and the Hotel, and representatives from the University.

2.51 The School has a clear Student Representation Policy. Students praise the representative system and student involvement in feedback processes. Outcomes from student surveys are shared with students and inform that School's action plans and annual review of courses. The review team heard students praise the School for communicating any changes to the courses or practices in a timely manner.

2.52 Student Representatives feed into the School's SSLCs and Programme Committee meetings. Students told the review team that the SSLCs were considered an effective forum for initiating change. In addition, a number of informal and ad hoc meetings occur to support these more formal School Committee meetings. The Student Representation Policy, which sets out the School's approach to student representation, states that students may attend the Faculty Board, the School's senior academic committee. While students are not formally represented on the committee, the review team heard that invitations are sent to students to facilitate the activity.

2.53 The review team heard from both the Head of Provider and the Chair of the School Board and representative of the Edge Foundation that the SSLC is crucial to the effective operation of the School's student engagement process, and that the feedback from the Committee makes a significant contribution to shaping the operation of its programmes. This is echoed in the student submission to this review and confirmed by students, who said that their views are listened to and that action is taken.

2.54 Student feedback is used to inform strategic steps taken by the School to plan and implement enhancement activity, and this contributed to the commendation reported under the judgement for Enhancement. This includes mechanisms such as student surveys; the process of innovation where student ideas are tested in the Hotel; the student suggestion scheme; and 'You Said, We Did' action plans that arise from SSLC and progress upwards to the Programme Committee and the Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee.

2.55 Student representatives receive training and guidance on their roles. The review team heard that student representatives feel adequately trained and prepared to undertake their representative role.

2.56 Students are invited to attend operational meetings held at the Wivenhoe House Hotel so as to enhance their professional experience. The review team heard that all students scheduled for duty at the Hotel are expected to attend its daily morning meeting. Additionally, Level 6 students are invited to attend the monthly Head of Department meetings at the Hotel, when scheduled for duty and subject to the confidential items for discussion.

2.57 The School's arrangements confirmed that it places significant value on student engagement, and the positive impact that timely and effective responses to the student voice have upon the students' learning environment is **good practice**.

2.58 The review team concludes that the School's arrangements for student engagement meets the Expectation and that the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.59 The School's procedures for assessment, marking and RPL are conducted in accordance with the University's approved regulations and marking policy. The School has submitted and had approved by the University variations to its Rules for Assessment to take account of the programme requirements. The external examination process is managed through the University to assure the standards of assessment and the quality of feedback. The School has a policy on student feedback that outlines the different mediums for feedback available. The School implements a system of internal verification in the setting and marking of assignments and its policies and procedures for appeals and complaints are approved by the University. Students are informed of the processes and arrangements for assessment in the Student Handbook.

2.60 The processes in place for assessment would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.61 The review team examined a series of documentary evidence relating to assessment including the School's policies, procedures and records for assessment and marking and external examiner reports. The team discussed the assessment process with senior managers, academic and professional staff and students as well as representatives of the University and the Hotel.

2.62 The review team found that the arrangements for assessment are robust and effective and that the School's assessment practices are kept under review. The review team heard that alterations are made as a result of student feedback and observations by external examiners.

2.63 The School's marking procedures adhere to the University of Essex requirements and there are clear pro formas for internal moderation and verification of marks. There is representation of the School's academic and professional staff on the University exam board and the School's processes for the generation and moderation of marks are clear and effective.

2.64 External examiner reports regard assessment criteria to be met for successful students and report where recommendations are made, for example in relation to the volume of assessment and the consistency of marking; these recommendations are addressed by the School.

2.65 The student submission identifies issues about the consistency and timing of feedback, and at times, the quality of feedback provided. The School has responded to these challenges by instituting marking consistency events and by staff training for staff involved in providing formal assessment feedback and informal feedback through the Hotel setting. Students recognise that there have been positive changes as a result of these interventions. The review team heard that students welcome the positive contribution arising from the adjustments to the assessment timetable, the greater clarity in assessment criteria and the timely receipt of feedback, which they consistently describe as constructive and having significantly improved their learning and development.

2.66 The School has put in place arrangements for the ongoing assurance of assessment practice, including the consistency in marking. The review team heard from students who commented on the value of the School's arrangements, including the PCRs (which do not formally constitute any part of the assessment process but are used by students to assist with reflections on professional practice). The review team additionally spoke to Hotel staff who commented on the value of the PCR when giving developmental feedback to students in the Hotel setting. The deliberate steps taken by the School to improve student learning opportunities have contributed to the review team's commendation for enhancement.

2.67 The review team heard that student progress is tracked through the School's fortnightly academic meetings. Students also expressed their appreciation for the support given by academic staff and singled out the roles of the Student Support Services Officer and the Training and Development Practitioner for their particularly student-centred assistance.

2.68 The team concludes that the arrangements for assessment are robust and are subject to continuous monitoring and improvement; therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.69 The School's external examination process is carried out in accordance with the terms of appointment set down by the University, extends to the completion of the University's annual and interim report templates and is forwarded to the School for discussion and action. Under the University's arrangements, the School may nominate a candidate for the role of external examiner, though the authority of appointment rests with the University. External examiner reports are considered informally at School academic team meetings and formally at the Programme Committee. The University oversees and monitors action plans that emerge from the external examiner reports through the ARC process.

2.70 The arrangements in place for the scrupulous use of external examiner reports would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.71 The team examined a wide range of evidence to assess the extent to which the School's arrangements meet the expectation, including its collaboration agreement, information available on the University website, the original and revised School Learning and Teaching Strategy and records from the external examination process. The team discussed the external examination process with senior managers, academic and professional staff, School students, and representatives from the University and the Hotel. Staff confirmed that they too have sight of the external examiners' reports.

2.72 External examiner reports are reviewed by the Vice Principal (Academic) and considered at Programme Committee. Feedback and actions arising are also shared with students through the SSLC, and action plans devised by the School's senior management team are reported to the Faculty Board. The School's responses to external examiner feedback are monitored through the University's ARC process and the University's Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee. Although students did not appear to be aware of the availability of external examiner reports, the review team heard and observed that the names of external examiners and their reports are made available to students on the VLE.

2.73 The School's external examiner verifies that the School's provision is meeting a satisfactory standard and that where they have made recommendations, for example about the volume of assessment and the consistency of marking, these recommendations have been addressed by the School. Documentary evidence provided demonstrates that the School has identified this as an action point in its 2015-16 ARC, resulting in the strategic implementation of a Train the Trainer programme for the Wivenhoe House Hotel's heads of department. The review team found that the School makes use of external examiner feedback and that the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy demonstrates the School's positive steps taken to address the issues identified. Students and academic staff also echoed the School's effectiveness in responding to issues raised.

2.74 The external examiners' reports are thus used effectively by the School to improve students' learning opportunities and to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the University. The team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

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

**Findings**

2.75 The School follows the procedures for course review and monitoring prescribed by the University of Essex that are set out in its collaboration agreement. This consists of the ARC and Periodic Review of courses completed every five years. The University provides guidance through its website and the ARC follows the University format. This is then considered by the University's Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee and oversight is maintained by the School Board via the Principal's reports.

2.76 The School's arrangements for programme monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.77 The review team considered a range of documentary evidence including the School's ARCs, records of meetings from its deliberative committees and reports made to the School Board. The team also discussed the School's arrangements with senior managers, academic and professional staff, staff from the Hotel, students, and representatives from the University.

2.78 The process for programme review occurs in accordance with the University schedule and the School has established mechanisms, through its deliberative committee structure, to manage and discharge these processes. The ARC is completed by the Vice Principal (Academic) through a consideration of data, and feedback from students and staff. Action plans emerge from these processes, and are subsequently monitored by the School and the University for completeness.

2.79 The review team concludes that the arrangements for course review and monitoring are robust and used to enhance the student learning experience. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.80 Under the terms of its collaborative agreement with the University, the School has a separate and University-approved appeals policy and procedure, which sets out the grounds on which a student may or may not appeal against an academic decision. The policy was approved by internally by students following a period of review and consultation in October 2014. The appeals procedure is based on the University's appeals procedure and has been approved by the University prior to its implementation. Additionally, the School has a separate and University approved complaints procedure, in accordance with the terms of its collaborative agreement. Data on numbers of appeals and complaints is gathered and reported to the University through the Curriculum, Quality and Systems Group Committee.

2.81 The School's policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.82 The review team examined the School's Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure, the School Complaints Policy and Procedure and its collaborative agreement. The team further discussed the School's arrangements and implementation of its policies and procedures with senior managers, academic and professional staff and students from the School, together with representatives from the University.

2.83 The policy and the collaborative agreement make clear that where an academic decision has been confirmed by an examination board, the determination of the outcome of the appeal will be handled by the University of Essex Registrar. The role of the School's Vice Principal (Academic) is to determine whether there are prima facie grounds for allowing the appeal to go forward to the University.

2.84 Both the appeals and complaints procedures are available in the Student Handbook and on the School's VLE. Additionally, students are signposted to the procedures with explanations covered during orientation (induction).

2.85 The School's record of disciplinary and academic offences and appeals shows that there have been no formal academic appeals since the School first underwent institutional approval with the University in 2013.

2.86 The student submission states that while students are aware of the complaints and appeals process, they find it easier to speak to the Student Services Officer. During the meeting with students, the review team heard confirmation that students are aware of the policy and its availability in the Student Handbook and VLE. Meetings with academic and professional staff confirmed that the policy and procedure is well understood by staff, and academic and professional staff reiterated that students will seek assistance from School staff and, principally, the Student Services Officer. The review team heard evidence to demonstrate that this role provided an effective support in negotiating student concerns within the School, the Hotel and with the University at large, and manages to defuse potential complaints while at a low level before escalation into formal procedures.

2.87 The review team therefore concludes that the procedures for academic appeals and student complaints meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.88 The School delivers its programmes in a hybrid model that involves the University of Essex (as its validating awarding organisation), the Edge Foundation (a charitable educational trust) and the Wivenhoe House Hotel (a four star hotel). The collaborative arrangement with the University falls under the HEFCE definition of a 'sub-contractual arrangement' (previously 'franchise arrangement') for the purposes of student reporting. The School is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students, and the students are registered with the University of Essex and included in the University's statutory returns. For the purpose of course design and delivery, the arrangement is described as 'validation', that is, the School designs and develops the programmes and these are then validated (approved) by the University for delivery by the School. The University takes ultimate responsibility through its processes and committee structures for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities and the main duties and responsibilities of each organisation is set out in the Responsibilities Checklist. The School has a risk register, which is maintained in order to ensure continuity of student experience and course delivery, including the Hotel.

2.89 The design of the School's arrangements that are in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.90 The review team scrutinised a series of documentary evidence including the School's collaborative agreement and approval evidence with the University of Essex, its Service Level Agreement with the Hotel, and records of meetings of its deliberative committees. The team also met representatives of the University, the Edge Foundation, the Hotel senior management team and staff, as well as the senior managers, academic and professional staff and students from the School.

2.91 The reporting mechanisms of the School committee structure and different memberships are firmly laid out, identifying the relationships between the University of Essex, the School, the Edge Foundation and Wivenhoe House Hotel. Additionally, the Wivenhoe House Board meets quarterly and the organisational heads of both the School and the Hotel sit on each other's boards in order to facilitate closer working relationships between the School and Hotel.

2.92 Wivenhoe House Hotel is owned by the University of Essex and is located on the Colchester Campus adjacent to the School's premises. The School, in partnership with the Hotel, provides opportunity for students to undertake work-based learning in the Hotel as part of their qualification. This partnership is governed by a Service Level Agreement and it is monitored by both the Hotel staff and the Wivenhoe House Board. The University of Essex Director of Campus Services (responsible for the commercial operation of the Wivenhoe House Hotel) and the School Principal also meet on a monthly basis to discuss operational developments for the two organisations. Furthermore, the General Manager of the Hotel is a member of the School's Programme Committee and SSLC and is in attendance at the University's Partnership Management Board.

2.93 The School gathers student feedback about their experience, including at the Hotel. This is principally through the SSLC but additionally through student surveys, outcomes from which are shared with the Hotel's General Manager. In the student submission to this review, students expressed the view that raising complaints about their experience in the Hotel has been difficult and not always confidential. However, at the visit, the review team heard students say that many of their concerns (as outlined under Expectation B3) had been addressed by both the School and the Hotel and that their student experience is strongly supported by both parties. The review team found evidence to demonstrate that both the School and the Hotel have strengthened arrangements in order to assure student learning opportunities through regular discussion of operational issues and enhancements of its relationship to address student feedback.

2.94 All assessments are set and marked by School academic staff, in accordance with the University requirements, although feedback from the Hotel staff is considered. The review team heard that academic staff used feedback given by hotel staff in relation to student conduct and professional skill development as part of the PCRs and progress discussions with students. Where changes to programmes are proposed, the Hotel is consulted, together with students, although changes are specifically driven by academic requirements and not by the Hotel's business needs.

2.95 The School manages all its publicity concerning its courses and seeks the views from its stakeholders, that is, students, alumni, the Wivenhoe House Hotel, the Edge Foundation and the University's Marketing department, on material prior to the final edit that is submitted to the University Academic Standards and Partnership Office (ASPO) for ratification.

2.96 Students undergo a set of rotational experiences working within the Wivenhoe House Hotel as a fundamental part of their degree programme. These work experiences are regarded as a strong unique selling point by the School and the degree of partnership and successful integration of Hotel staff and School staff into the learning enterprise is critical to the success of its degree provision. The partnership experienced an initial period of dissatisfaction within the student cohort concerning the strained relationship between students and Hotel staff and the lack of understanding of differences on behalf of both parties (also noted by an external examiner interim report which suggests Train the Trainer qualifications for Wivenhoe House Hotel staff). The Principal's report of November 2015 consciously acknowledged the students' concern about this relationship and their learning environment in the hotel, and it aimed to put in place Hotel staff training processes, academic staff embedded in the Hotel, Hotel staff representation on its committee structure, and various other actions to encourage better integration. The remedial programme that the School put in place to ensure that the learning opportunities offered by the Hotel to students takes place in an informed, constructive and supportive manner has been widely praised by students as leading to a transformation in their learning experience. The partnership has been greatly enhanced by this process of greater collaboration over the past year, and it is clearly resulting in improved and enhanced student learning opportunities.

2.97 The School has developed further initiatives, using the expertise and feedback from the Hotel, to enhance the student learning opportunities, including the establishment of a live hotel financial database for students and academic staff to use in the research and analysis of hotel operations; the implementation of a hotel management innovation scheme for students; the appointment of students to Wivenhoe House Hotel recruitment panels; the collaborative development of the PCRs; and the appointment of a Training and Development Practitioner to provide skills-based support for students prior to and while they are working in the Hotel, a role initially funded by the Hotel and now by the School. All these initiatives have resulted in strong student satisfaction. The collaborative relationship between the School and the Hotel is recognised as good practice under Expectation B3.

2.98 The review team found the School to have effective mechanisms in place to support the oversight of its arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement with other organisations, and therefore finds that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

2.100 Of the 10 Expectations in this area all are met and the associated level of risk is low.

2.101 The review team has made two recommendations in respect of the Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*. These relate to the School's adherence to the University processes for programme variation, however minor, and its formalised internal procedure for the authorisation and design of new programme proposals prior to submission for approval by the awarding body, the University of Essex.

2.102 There are four features of good practice identified in this area relating to the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education; Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching; Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement* and *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*.

2.103 The review team also made one affirmation in this area. While the team recognises the potential positive impact of the developments that the School has made in relation to a staff development policy, it is not yet possible to review its outcomes in relation to this judgement area and therefore affirm the steps being taken.

2.104 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the School **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 School provides two key sources of information in liaison with its partners: the School website and prospectus. All information is initially generated by the School and then sent to the Edge Foundation, the University's ASPO and the University Marketing Department to ensure adherence to the University's brand standard.

3.2 The School's arrangements for the quality of information in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team examined a series of documentary evidence in order to test the extent to which the expectation is met, including the School prospectus, the website, the Marketing Plan, and the Work Flow Model for Marketing. The team further discussed the School's arrangements with senior managers, academic and professional staff, and students, together with representatives from the University and the Hotel.

3.4 The production of marketing material is initially developed by the School Operations Manager. After soliciting the views of all parties before the final edit, the material is then sent to the Edge Foundation, the Hotel, the University Academic Standards and Partnerships Office, and the University Marketing Department, to ensure compliance with the University's brand identity. A flow chart governing this process ensures standard practice.

3.5 Both the website and prospectus are regularly reviewed and updated. The website identifies the University as the degree-awarding body and the overseer of quality assurance. The website also identifies various links with the hospitality industry, such as industry-sponsored scholarships, company sponsored rooms in the Hotel, and industry masterclass providers.

3.6 Information for prospective students is found on the website and within the prospectus, and the Admissions Policy is also available on the School's website. Problems with retention in early 2015 have prompted a review of publicity material to ensure clarity of message, which included focus groups with alumni and newly registered students, and the introduction of publicity material to include graduate stories that are real case studies of previous graduates. Students told the review team that they found advertising material to be accurate and useful during their recruitment experience, and following registration.

3.7 The School uses the University-approved student handbook template and all newly registered students are issued with a copy. It is also made available on the School's VLE. The handbook contains all policies and procedures applicable to School students and directs them to other useful information and services available. Students generally praise the quality of information provided by the School, and they are clear about where to find it, for example the rules on plagiarism and assessment criteria.

3.8 The School issues University of Essex degree certificates, although a transcript comes from the School according to a standard template from the University. Students are

also able to request a statement outlining the requirements of their course. All School data is provided to the University for annual statutory returns, and the Key Information Set (KIS) is available on Unistats.

3.9 The review team found evidence to demonstrate a range of policies and information available covering all aspects of admission, the programme and its modes of delivery, the student experience, the School itself, and its partnership arrangements with the Hotel.

3.10 The review team deemed the quality of the information available to be fit for purpose, accessible and reliable and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



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

3.11 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12 The review team found that the School was able to demonstrate the availability of a range of policies and information covering all aspects of admission, the programme and its modes of delivery, the student experience, the School and its partnership arrangements with the Hotel. Both the School's website and its prospectus are regularly reviewed and updated to maintain the reliability of information, and student feedback confirmed the accuracy and value of its contents both prior to and during programme delivery.

3.13 The review team judges that the one Expectation is met, with a low level of risk and found no recommendations, affirmations or good practice attached to the Expectation.

3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the School **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 School's own documentation and Learning and Teaching Strategy outlines the School's enhancement agenda, which can be summarised as 'a commitment to excellence in all aspects of the provision and its strategic drive for continuous improvement'. The School's senior deliberative committees consider, approve, and oversee implementation of initiatives and monitor the impact on student learning opportunities that informs revisions made thereafter.

4.2 The mechanisms in place for feedback, implementation and reporting would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The team examined a wide range of documentary evidence including the School documentation, records of meetings for its deliberative committees, responses to stakeholder feedback and its improvement action plans and enhancement initiatives. The team discussed the School's approach to enhancement in meetings with the School's Principal, senior managers from the School and the Hotel, academic and professional staff, students and representatives from the Edge Foundation and the University.

4.4 The team's examination of the evidence determined that the School has taken deliberate strategic steps to build on the strengths identified in the QAA Review for Educational Oversight of Kaplan Open Learning in November 2013. Of particular importance has been the significant progress made in the integration of the Hotel with the School, including the regular weekly operational meetings between the School Principal and the Hotel's General Manager; the School and Hotel Operations Meetings; the engagement of School academic staff, including the School Principal, in the operational activity of the Hotel; the involvement of Hotel staff in the development and content of PCRs to enhance the quality of feedback provided to students both academically and as part of their programme of study; the professional feedback given to students by Hotel staff; and the inclusion of students in the Hotel's recruitment process. The review team found the collaborative relationship between the School and the Hotel to be a feature of good practice under Expectation B3.

4.5 The School has sought to instil an ethos and commitment to change and enhancement through its deliberative committee arrangements. The representation of the School and the Hotel on the two respective organisation boards is conducive in strengthening and engaging partners in the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The School has developed a strategy for incremental improvement, with an associated action plan 2015-16 that is monitored through the School Board meeting. Its updated School Learning and Teaching Strategy (February 16) documents its responsiveness to feedback through its formal and informal communication systems. The ARC and the minutes of the Faculty Board document the action taken by School senior managers. The effectiveness of initiatives is monitored through the SSLC and Programme Committee that culminates in the University's programme review and evaluation process (the ARC process) and is used to inform the strategic and deliberate steps taken by the School.

4.6 The School has designed effective mechanisms for student feedback to be gathered, outlined in its Student Feedback Policy; this includes the SSLC, the Programme Committee, student surveys, module evaluations and focus groups. The review team

identified the positive impact of the School's timely and effective responses to the student voice as a feature of good practice under Expectation B5.

4.7 Other examples of Enhancement are documented in the self-evaluation document and the review team heard from students about the positive impact of the School's initiatives. Notably, the appointment of a dedicated Student Services Officer arose from analysis of the ARC and feedback from academic and professional staff who deemed that the role would add value to the student learning experience. The review team heard from students and academic and professional staff at the School, and from the Hotel staff, about the contribution the role has made in strengthening the relationship between the School and the Hotel, and in addressing potential barriers for students who might otherwise have withdrawn. The appointment of a Training and Development Practitioner, who is an experienced hospitality professional, has aided the understanding of Hotel staff and helped students with the expected levels of performance required in the Hotel, so that students are able to apply their theoretical learning to the practical experience of being in a hotel setting.

4.8 Students praised the introduction of the suggestion system at the Hotel, which had led to an afternoon tea project devised, organised and run entirely by students, providing opportunity to develop, test and display a wide range of hospitality management skills. The School complements its delivery with guest speakers and industry masterclasses and the inclusion of students at conferences such as the Master Innholders Conference in London. The review team found the opportunities for students to network with industry experts to be a feature of good practice under Expectation B4.

4.9 It was clear from the documentary evidence provided that the School and the Wivenhoe House Hotel are committed to continuous enhancement of the student learning opportunities. The School and the Hotel set a strategic target for all senior managers in the hotel to have completed the School's Train the Trainer programme, designed to assist with understanding the academic nature of the School's provision and support the student feedback process. The review team heard that the Hotel was on target to achieve this objective in time for Easter. The School has devised induction sessions for Heads of Department at the Hotel to brief them on the requirements of the programme while students are on rotation in the Hotel's different departments; the review team heard from students about its positive impact in enhancing the communication process between students and Hotel staff. The School and Hotel responded to student feedback about the length of rotations in the hotel and its subsequent impact on the management of students' academic workload, to include time for students to complete assessment activity and incorporate reflection gained from the practical experience in the hotel.

4.10 The strategic approach to the development and implementation of a wide range of initiatives between the School and the Hotel, which informs and enhances the student learning experience, is **good practice**.

4.11 The School's arrangements for the progress made in improving the students' experience and recognising the top level commitment to ensuring that this work continues, leads the review team to commend the School's work on enhancement and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.12 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.13 The review team judges that the Expectation is met, with a low level of risk.

4.14 The review team found the School's ethos and commitment to change and enhancement through its deliberative committee to demonstrate a strategic focus in its strategies and plans to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities effectively. It was clear from the documentary evidence provided that the School and the Wivenhoe House Hotel are committed to continuous enhancement, and the review team identified the positive impact of the School's timely and effective responses to the student voice as an area of good practice under Expectation B5.

4.15 The integration of enhancement initiatives, developed between the School and the Hotel and designed to enhance the student learning opportunities, is good practice.

4.16 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School is **commended** and meets UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 Student employability is a central aspect of the School offering, and the School takes pride in its work-ready provision and its ethos of professionalism. All aspects of the programme and its delivery have been devised to produce applicants with a strong commercial hospitality education, from the very first point of admission to completion.

5.2 The School's unique selling point is a hospitality qualification that includes work experience within a live four-star hotel, Wivenhoe House Hotel. Students graduating from the BA programme gain extensive operational, supervisory and managerial experience across all three levels of their degree.

5.3 Students undergo a set of rotational experiences, working within the Hotel as part of their degree programme. These are regarded as a strong selling point by the School, despite an initial period where the experiences of students in the Hotel and with the Hotel staff had been a strong source of dissatisfaction, expressed in the student submission to this review. As a result of strenuous and concerted action, the learning environment in the hotel has been significantly improved, as the School, together with senior staff from the Hotel, has put in place staff training for Hotel staff, and School and Hotel representation on its mutual committee structures, so as to encourage better integration. As outlined under Expectation B10, this transformation by a series of deliberate enhancements has led to it being a widely praised aspect of the student experience.

5.4 The School delivers a course that inculcates a strong work ethic and occupational knowledge, including clear protocols for professional appearance and behaviour. With employers engaged in professional workshops, alumni engaged in networking events, and a strong ethos of work readiness, the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education statistics indicate a high level of success (91.7 per cent) in employability and careers training.

5.5 To conclude, employability is demonstrably a strong and unique element of the School experience. Students receive a wide variety of training in aspects of hospitality, which is embedded within the curriculum, and employability is evidently routinely addressed in daily activities and learning. Students get excellent exposure to the professionals in the hospitality industry, and their daily training allows them to experience the professionalism required in employment. Students' expectations and experience of working in Wivenhoe House Hotel clearly needs careful management by all parties, although efforts to bridge any gaps are part of a thoroughgoing enhancement process and a bilateral management consciousness.

## 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 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

### 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.

**Public information**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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