



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance t/a Regents Theological College

November 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance t/a Regents Theological College (the College). The review took place from 14 to 16 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Ian Duce
- Dr Douglas Halliday
- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

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

Key findings

Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the 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 **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The highly effective use of contextualised individual admission interviews enabling the College to assess students' suitability for admission (Expectation B2).
- The strategic and comprehensive approach to developing students' knowledge, spirituality and practical skills (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).
- The very effective arrangements and supportive ethos that enables the academic and personal development of students Expectation (B4).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- the steps being taken to engage students in opportunities that enhance employability (Expectation B4)
- the steps being taken to formalise the process for work placement arrangements (Expectation B10).

About the provider

Regents Theological College was founded in 1925 as the ministerial training establishment of the Elim Pentecostal Church. It was initially situated in Clapham Park, London. In 1992 the College obtained validation by the then Council for National Academic Awards for the one-year and two-year courses leading to the CertHE and DipHE awards respectively. Subsequently the College developed programmes with a range of higher education awarding bodies and currently is in a partnership arrangement with the University of Chester (the University). This arrangement extends to research, postgraduate and undergraduate programmes through arrangements established in 2011 and 2012.

At the time of the review visit the programmes provided by the College were:

- BA (Hons) Applied Theology
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology and Performing Arts
- MTh in Applied Theology
- MA in Applied Theology
- MA Pentecostal & Charismatic Studies
- MA Missional Leadership
- MRes in Applied Theology
- MRes in Theology
- MPhil and PhD programmes in Theology.

The College has decided to phase out the MA Pentecostal & Charismatic Studies, MTh in Applied Theology and the MA Missional Leadership and offer an MA Applied Theology from 2017-18 which subsumes some of the key modules from the three other programmes.

The associated student numbers are:

- BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Full-time) - 92 full-time equivalent
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology/Performing Arts (Full-time) - 15 full-time equivalent
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology/PTOL (Part-time) - 25 full-time equivalent
- Postgraduate (Taught) (Part-time) - 34 full-time equivalent
- Research Students - 12 Actual.

The College appointed a new Principal January 2015 and has subsequently re-assessed its position. Future developmental areas identified are:

- non-accredited delivery off site
- accredited delivery off site
- further investment in digital Infrastructure to support more flexible accessible and central approaches
- maintaining numbers of residential undergraduate students whilst growing the context-based students over 5 years to match the residential numbers aiming to double the undergraduate student population
- further, the College has identified the following key challenges in its future development
- to integrate a learning philosophy that incorporates a three-fold focus of intellectual/professional skills and personal formation into theological education
- the challenge of a shrinking market with probably too many theological Colleges chasing too few applicants
- a need to respond to a market where applicants want to study part-time in their context rather than in a three-year residential setting

- a need to become more flexible through the use of digital technology and off-site delivery
- providing training for Elim staff and ministers by becoming more central to the process of initial ministerial formation and training
- responding to the training needs of the movement of 500 churches incorporating potential and existing ministers as well as overseas missions
- responding to the ever-growing compliance obligations with the impact of associated costs on finite budgets.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College relies on the principles and regulations of the University of Chester, its awarding body, to ensure that programmes are aligned with the FHEQ, qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements. The regulations provide the College with clear explanations of the processes they must follow to ensure that programmes meet the necessary requirements of the awarding body.

1.2 The team found that the significant role of the awarding body, clear consideration of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement and focus on the FHEQ through quality assurance processes were sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The team tested this Expectation by meeting students and staff, and reviewed programme specifications, committee minutes and documentation prepared for review events.

1.4 The College used a Course Review in November 2016 to reflect on the new Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies. In doing so the College

determined that it was already aligned with many of the features identified in the Statement such as the programmes' focus on religious professionals and ministers, use of study visits, placements and work-based learning as well as the significance placed on off-campus and distance learning. The Course Review was also used to ensure that students on internal tracks are able to access employment experience.

1.5 The team found that the Dean of Undergraduate Studies plays a central role in ensuring alignment with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements; however, understanding among the wider academic staff team was less demonstrable. Notwithstanding this, the team determined that the significant role of the awarding body, robust review processes and awareness among senior college staff ensures that Expectation A1 is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6 Programmes delivered by the College are approved by the University of Chester and developed using their Guidelines for Revalidation and Validation Events. The College is linked with the University's Department of Theology and Religious Studies, which assigns an Academic Link Tutor and Partnership Administrator to support the College. The College also maintains a close working relationship with the University Academic Quality and Standards Section (AQSS) which provides further support to the College through the Partnership Collaboration and Implementation Officer.

1.7 The College operates an Academic Board which plays a central role in monitoring academic provision including scrutiny of assessment, programme developments and modifications, the production of module and programme specifications as well as overseeing College action plans. The College Leadership Team has ultimate executive oversight for academic standards. There is cross-membership between these two bodies and they met jointly to set the strategic direction for course development in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

1.8 The University's comprehensive academic regulations, clear links between College and University staff and the College's coherent committee structure would enable Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.9 The team tested this Expectation by viewing University regulations, meeting with staff and students and examining the College committee structure and associated minutes.

1.10 The team found evidence that Academic Board is exercising its responsibilities effectively. Although some minutes are brief, discussion is held around key issues including the production of module descriptors, admissions and the Course Review Process. The work of Academic Board is supported by a subcommittee consisting of the College's three Deans. Although this subcommittee operates in a less formal manner the team found that it helps to inform the work of Academic Board and the wider College.

1.11 The structure supporting Academic Board is appropriate for the College's scale of provision and includes Faculty meetings, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees and a Student-Staff Liaison Committee. Students informed the team that they felt represented and able to inform College decision making.

1.12 The team concludes that as a result of the coherent and effective committee structure, involvement of students and clear interrelationship with awarding body structures Expectation A2.1 is met and the level of risk is low.

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

1.13 The University of Chester as the awarding body is responsible for maintaining the definitive documentation for each programme and qualification provided by the College and provides comprehensive guidelines for the production of programme specifications and module descriptors. They are written directly to the University portal and following approval the definitive version is available on the University website.

1.14 Programme specifications and module descriptors are also provided on the College portal alongside other course information and study guides. Modifications to the documents are approved through the College's committee structures and forwarded to the University in an annual update document. The proposed changes are uploaded to the University through the portal programme and module editor, and after final approval they are locked for publication. The latter processes enable the University to maintain version control of the programmes and modules provided by the College. Outlines of the programme specifications are contained in the undergraduate and postgraduate taught programme handbooks and available on the portal.

1.15 Programme specifications describe educational aims, learning outcomes, programme structures, modules, assessments and entry requirements as well as key features of the learning and teaching at each level. The University prescribes the requirement for programme specifications and module descriptors to be mapped against the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.16 Annual monitoring and periodic review processes are mandated by the University and use programme specifications and module descriptors as a reference point to evaluate the operation of the approved courses. The University is responsible for maintaining and supplying records of study and provides a printed transcript with award certificates.

1.17 The approach to maintaining definitive records of programmes and qualifications would in theory allow the College to meet Expectation A2.2.

1.18 The review team examined the Organisational Agreement between the University and the College, programme and module documentation provided through their respective websites and read student handbooks. The team also met staff involved in preparing and maintaining definitive records and students at the College.

1.19 Programme specifications examined by the team were comprehensive documents, and along with module descriptors demonstrated alignment with the FHEQ and UK credit framework and explicitly linked content to the Theology and religious studies Subject Benchmark Statement.

1.20 The review team confirmed that the College staff were aware of the requirements of the validating partner and the value of the programme specifications and module descriptors as reference points for the delivery and assessment of the programmes. Staff awareness is facilitated through close liaison with the University staff and 'partner days'. The team learnt

that the College directly downloads information from the University website to provide content for its handbooks and virtual learning environment (VLE) ensuring consistency of information across these platforms.

1.21 Students whom the team met were aware that programme specifications could be found via the student portal.

1.22 The team confirms that the College fulfils its role in the maintenance of definitive records of programmes and qualifications and that staff and students have an understanding of their value as a reference point and therefore Expectation A2.2 is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.23 As stated in the Organisational and Programme Agreements, responsibility for the approval of programmes offered by the College lies with the University of Chester as the validating partner. Within this process the College is permitted to design and develop its own programmes; documentation is prepared using a series of standard University templates.

1.24 The validation process includes consideration of academic standards as described in the University Handbook. Academic Board monitors validation, periodic revalidation and provides senior-level leadership for the process.

1.25 The documented process and associated procedures provide a framework for the management of standards as part of the approval process and would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.26 The team reviewed the revalidation framework set out in the University Handbook, considered a full set of revalidation documentation provided by the College, and discussed the process with College staff.

1.27 The team found that the University Handbook sets out a thorough and well-documented process; this was supplemented by helpful guidance and principles to enable the documentation to be completed as fully as possible by the College using standard templates. At the time of the review visit revalidation had been on a six-yearly cycle but was under consideration by the University with the period between reviews likely to be shortened. The College had most recently undergone a successful revalidation in 2016.

1.28 The team found a comprehensive and effective level of engagement with the process by the College. Academic Board provided leadership for this process and ensured that the programmes submitted for approval aligned with the College strategy. Academic Board also monitored the process and development of the documentation throughout the academic year prior to revalidation.

1.29 The University requires a five-year reflective Critical Commentary as part of the revalidation process. The team found the requirement to complete this document had provided a valuable opportunity for the College to take stock of its programmes. Other useful aspects of the process were that former students of the College were included on the revalidation panel.

1.30 The team was confident that the approval framework being followed was robust and required clear evidence that the academic standards established by the College meet the UK threshold and are also consistent with the requirements of the University as the validating partner and degree-awarding body.

1.31 The team concludes that robust processes are consistently and effectively followed and that there is very effective engagement in the approval process by the College. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.32 The University of Chester is responsible for ensuring that credit is awarded only for achievement of learning outcomes, as specified in the Organisational and Programme Agreements. Standards are aligned to the FHEQ through the validation process. The University also requires that programmes have specific outcomes at each level.

1.33 The University has a full set of regulations for the assessment of students. Academic Board has a sub-group which reviews all assessments. Marking requirements are also specified by the University.

1.34 This framework and associated assessment policies, as specified by the University, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35 The team tested this Expectation by scrutinising assessment frameworks, policies and procedures. The team also reviewed external examiners' reports, records of annual monitoring and discussed the implementation of assessment with staff and students.

1.36 The team found that the University has comprehensive regulations for the assessment of students. This included detailed guidance on the operation of robust assessment regimes. The team saw good evidence of effective assessment mapping from module to programme outcomes at each level. Comprehensive generic marking criteria set by the University were further developed by the College for its own effective use. Furthermore, the University assessment framework included a requirement that learning hours and assessment word counts are consistent across modules. Staff described processes that were consistent with this framework.

1.37 Validation procedures consider the volume of formative and summative assessments using assessment grids. The College was found to have produced detailed and informative summaries of assessments. Assessment strategies contained clear statements on the principles and implementation of assessment and were observed to operate as stated. Assessments are scrutinised by a sub-group of Academic Board and external examiners, where the latter confirm that standards are in line with UK expectations.

1.38 The team found that marking procedures, as operated, followed University regulations, this included a requirement for second marking and further scrutiny where appropriate.

1.39 The team concludes that there was a broad range of evidence that the procedures in place ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded on the basis of achieving clearly defined learning outcomes. The team agreed that the processes operated by the

1.40 College were in line with the requirements of the degree-awarding body and that they were effective. Thus 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

1.41 As the awarding body, the University of Chester is responsible for the monitoring and review of the College's programmes. The College therefore follows the specified procedures laid out in the University Handbook. Annual partnership reports are produced by the College, which include monitoring of student attainment, and are responded to by the University.

1.42 A Partnership Review is undertaken by the University every three years to confirm that the College meets University standards and quality expectations. As described in section A3.1, a six-yearly programme revalidation is also undertaken with the most recent being in November 2016.

1.43 This suite of complementary monitoring processes, operated by the University in conjunction with the College provides a framework which would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.44 The team tested this Expectation by reviewing the specifications for each of these review processes, reading reports and other associated documentation and discussing their operation with staff at the College.

1.45 The annual undergraduate collaborative monitoring return is completed by the College with an equivalent process for postgraduate research students. The team found those to be comprehensive and analytical, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Careful consideration was also made of student attainment through progression and attrition data, external examiner reports and student feedback reports. Clear actions were assigned to individuals to facilitate follow-up actions. The team learned that the University had revised the annual monitoring process to place more emphasis on datasets, which were to be provided to the College throughout the year. The College receives detailed and constructive feedback from the University following consideration by the University Humanities Faculty Board of Studies and AQSS.

1.46 The Partnership Review, occurring every three years, is used by the University and the College to ensure that University standards are met and that quality expectations are fulfilled. The team considered these Partnership Review reports to be wide ranging with the College taking care to engage fully and constructively with the review process. Actions arising from the Partnership Review are monitored by the College's Academic Board. The team found evidence of effective progress against the most recent set of Partnership Review recommendations. There is a six-yearly programme revalidation with the most recent being held in November 2016. The team noted that this provided an effective process to ensure alignment with the FHEQ.

1.47 The team concludes on the basis of this evidence that the College is operating effective and robust processes for monitoring and review. In addition, the team notes sound oversight of the processes by the College with high levels of self-reflection among College staff. The team considers this Expectation to be 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

1.48 Through its partnership with the University of Chester, the College ensures that its provision benefits from external and independent expertise at various stages in a programme's cycle. The University liaises with the College to ensure that external subject specialists participate on validation and revalidation panels. These processes also involve alumni as panel members. Programmes benefit from the appointment of an external examiner who contributes to programme monitoring. In addition to this, the preparatory stage of revalidation includes an opportunity for external independent specialists to scrutinise programmes prior to the formal stage. College staff also meet with potential employers during the course development phase.

1.49 The College's consultation with employers, use of external expertise during course development, validation and revalidation, together with the involvement of alumni and a clear role for external examiners would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.50 The team tested the Expectation by meeting students, staff and employers. The team also viewed validation and revalidation documentation, external examiner reports and documentation relating to the approval of modifications.

1.51 External input is routinely sought in the approval and ongoing development of College programmes. The College's role within the wider Elim movement helps to ensure that practitioners and employers are available and willing to discuss programme content and the employability of students and graduates. External examiners' reports are in place and students confirmed they are made available.

1.52 The team found that the close links with Elim and the wider network of related employers, and thorough use of external examiner reports ensure Expectation A3.4 is met and that 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 and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.53 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.54 There are seven Expectations in this area and all are met with a low level of risk and there are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice.

1.55 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the College offered on behalf of the degree-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 Programme approval is the responsibility of the University of Chester as the awarding body. The University Handbook details the process of programme approval which includes consideration of standards (as discussed in section A3). An initial validation of programmes occurred in 2012 with a successful revalidation by the University in 2016.

2.2 Programme approval is managed by the University using an online editor for producing programme specifications to a standard format. Furthermore, the University requires comprehensive supporting documents for revalidation, this includes Programme Statements giving the purpose and rationale for programmes.

2.3 These arrangements for programme design, development and approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team explored the operation of programme design, development and approval by discussing their operation with students and staff, reviewing the operation of this process, and considering full sets of approval documentation produced by the College.

2.5 The University's framework for the design, development and approval of programmes was found to be thorough, comprehensive and clearly articulated in the University Handbook having explicit reference to reference points including FHEQ, the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification statements. The College is free to design its own programmes within this framework and was found to have produced a comprehensive and thorough set of documentation. Support was provided to the College by the University's Theology and Religious Studies Department and the central AQSS Department. The University convenes a validation panel operated as described in the University Handbook. Programme approval and revalidation currently follow the same process with revalidation occurring every six years; at the review, the team learned that the University was likely to change this to every three years.

2.6 Responsibility for collating and submitting the documentation to the University sits with the College's Academic Registrar. Academic Board convened a sub-group consisting of the three Academic Deans to provide leadership on course design issues. Additional training and support is provided by the College for staff who have no prior experience of developing approval documentation.

2.7 The process was found to be effectively managed by the University through an online editor used to produce programme specifications supported by detailed and effective guidance for these and module descriptors. This ensures that the College's documents conform to University requirements and have a common format. The online system allowed effective monitoring of revisions, version control and a single authoritative version.

2.8 The team found that the College had undertaken a wide-ranging series of consultations as part of the revalidation process in 2016. This included students, the Student

Representative Council, alumni, adjunct faculty, and employers. This provided the College with a set of valuable and informative perspectives on its programmes in preparation for revalidation.

2.9 Following an initial validation of courses in 2012, the College had a successful revalidation in 2016. Under the leadership of the new College Principal and the Academic Board, the College had used this as an opportunity for restructuring and consolidation of its academic programmes resulting in a common 20-credit module structure, including a mapping of new and withdrawn modules and formative and summative assessments. The team found this had been facilitated by an effective strategic planning process involving the Leadership Team and Academic Board, with Academic Board assuming the responsibility for monitoring and managing proposed developments to programmes.

2.10 One of the documents required by the University is a Critical Commentary. The team found that this document had become a significant reflective and strategic tool used widely within the College to discuss the opportunities presented by the revalidation process. The team considered this to be an analytical and reflective account of the College with clear articulation of future plans, which demonstrated a high level of awareness of the wider context within which the College operates. Approval also requires Programme Statements, which were found to give a clear purpose and strong rationale for the programmes offered by the College. Altogether, the documents gave the team a strong sense of a strategic underpinning to programme development within the College. In addition, the College had developed a placement protocol, a revised approach to learning and teaching, a new strategy for online learning and a new timetable structure.

2.11 After the successful revalidation in 2016, a working group was established by the College to review the operation of the approval process and to look for further enhancements to the process.

2.12 The team agreed that the programme approval and revalidation process is robust and that the College has undertaken a wide-ranging review of its provision as part of the process with the aim of both enhancing programmes and adapting them effectively to external factors. As a result, the College has a consistent and clear articulation of the nature and purpose of its programmes. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

Findings

2.13 The Programme Agreement between the College and its degree-awarding partner identifies that responsibility for the admissions process lies with the College within guidelines laid down by the University. The admissions strategy and procedures are articulated in a recent College Admissions Policy.

2.14 The Higher Education Strategy 2016 builds on discussions within the College Leadership Team and seeks to maintain its traditional approach to recruitment while broadening its offering to include more flexible modes of delivery of its BA programmes, including greater investment in educational technology and the development of both campus-based and context-based learning environments.

2.15 Potential applicants can find information about the mission of the College, its programmes, fees, student life and open days via the College website, which also provides a link to the application form for the 'Just Looking' open days, which allow potential students to gather information and sample aspects of the student experience.

2.16 Applicants complete an application form which is available online or via email. Applications are examined by two staff members including the Pastoral Dean to establish on educational grounds whether the application should proceed to interview in which case two references are sought. Interviews are held at the College and are conducted by two staff members usually including the Pastoral Dean and track leader for the programme chosen, using a question checklist. The checklist may include questions designed to clarify whether students have additional needs which may require support and also helps to prompt the interviewer to highlight features of the educational provision as well as providing the interviewee with an opportunity to seek answers to queries. For Applied Theology and Performing Arts, candidates will perform an audition before the interview.

2.17 Applicants for the MA and MRes programmes are considered by the Postgraduate Academic Dean who usually conducts telephone or Skype interviews.

2.18 Recognition of prior learning is identified by applicants and evidence is reviewed by the Academic Registrar and Academic Dean. Where appropriate an application may be forwarded to the awarding body who is responsible for a final decision through its accreditation of prior learning review panel.

2.19 The notes of the interview process and the decision reached are returned to the Admissions Office. Individual applications are tracked by completion of an action sheet during the process, which is retained with individual applications. Successful candidates are sent an offer letter and information about application for Disability Support Allowance. Unsuccessful applicants are advised by letter of the reasons for rejection and provided with the offer of feedback, and details of the process and grounds for submitting an appeal against the decision (see paragraph 2.98, Section B9).

2.20 The recruitment and admissions process is reviewed by the Operations Manager, other College leaders and staff involved in admissions at the end of each admissions cycle, such that modifications can impact on the next cohort of applicants.

2.21 The selection, recruitment and admissions processes operated by the College have the potential to meet Expectation B2.

2.22 To establish whether these procedures were transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive, the review team examined the admissions policy, information provided to applicants and other relevant documents and met with staff involved in recruitment and admissions, and students.

2.23 The College website provides an attractive and easily accessible suite of information for prospective applicants. Students for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes confirmed that the website provided them with the foundations of their information about the College and the open days were a particularly effective additional resource to guide their decision to apply to the College.

2.24 The College identifies itself as having a major role to provide training for ministers and congregations within the Elim Church. Selection of students involves consideration of experience and vocational aspiration as well as academic qualifications. Academic requirements for the programmes are outlined in the programme specifications. For non-mature students, entry requirements are typically 112 UCAS points and GCSE English Language. The latter English qualification is also the requirement for mature students, but in the absence of such evidence the applicant must pass an internal English proficiency test. There is evidence that the College applies its entry requirements to support entrants from less-academic backgrounds.

2.25 Staff discussed with the team the importance of the admissions interviews in demonstrating applicants' vocational and subject-related interest and the team noted the careful and structured way in which these interviews were conducted. Students explained to the team that they regarded the admission interview as a crucial part of the process and that the interviews were differentiated in terms of their length and depth to meet the individual educational background of the applicant and to enable the College effectively to assess their suitability for the programmes available and to provide useful feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants. The review team formed the opinion that the highly effective use of contextualised individual admission interviews enabling the College to assess students' suitability for admission is **good practice**.

2.26 Overall, the review team concludes that the College operates inclusive, fair and transparent procedures and in its selection of students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds who successfully complete its programmes, demonstrates that it meets the Expectation with low risk.

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

2.27 The College's approach to learning and teaching is guided by its Learning and Teaching Strategy which was introduced in response to a QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014. This strategy is complemented by the College Higher Education Strategy which was updated in October 2016. Strategic oversight of learning and teaching lies with the College Leadership Team and Academic Board, with Academic Deans responsible for formulating and managing programmes. The primary strategic aim of the College is the theological formation of students and the development of professionally competent graduates for both church and non-church contexts.

2.28 The University of Chester approves teaching staff either at the point of validation or through its approved tutor process using its standard template form. Lecturers and support staff are subject to annual appraisals, which for academic staff incorporates an Annual Scholarly Activity Form. The appraisal process is being reviewed by the Director of Academic Development in December 2017. Staff also attend faculty training days on an annual basis and are encouraged to attend training events at the University of Chester.

2.29 The team considers that the clear strategic framework, awarding body oversight and staff development arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.30 The team tested this Expectation by reading the Learning and Teaching and Higher Education strategies. The team also met students and staff, viewed student feedback submissions and the VLE.

2.31 The Learning and Teaching Strategy was updated in June 2017 to take account of the period up to 2020. The Undergraduate Academic Dean has developed a comprehensive statement on the College's approach to learning and teaching that features explicitly in the Higher Education Strategy and outlines the distinctive features of campus-based and distance learning study in the College's context.

2.32 The team found that the College has produced a clear and coherent teaching and learning strategy that is well understood by its key stakeholders. The policy places an emphasis on 'heads, hearts and hands' which is used to articulate the College's vision to develop students' intellectual capabilities, spirituality and character during their time at the College, alongside a commitment to enabling them to use those skills in practice. This strategy has driven a number of key College decisions including curriculum revisions which enable blended learning, greater emphasis on technology enhanced learning and the expansion of embedded placement activity. Students value these aspects of their programme and the team therefore considers the strategic and comprehensive approach to developing students' knowledge, spirituality and practical skills to be **good practice**.

2.33 The College has recently reviewed its teaching practice and generated a report with recommendations for improvement during 2017-18. A particular focus of this work has been a drive to both meet and exceed stipulations of the Equality Act 2010. This has led to changes on the VLE where students are now able to alter the presentation of online material

into a more accessible format. The Director of Academic Development has overseen improvements in the VLE since its introduction in 2013-14. All modules now have a bespoke page on the VLE including the module descriptor, study guide and supporting notes and presentations.

2.34 The College has an effective approach to supporting transition into higher education and between levels. An induction lecture is delivered at the beginning of each new year of study to support students' understanding of the respective requirements. Students confirmed that this was helpful in developing their understanding of assessment and for academic writing purposes.

2.35 A system of peer review is in operation across the College and a clear schedule of reviews was executed for 2016-17. Feedback gathered through reviews is appropriate and supports critical reflection among teaching staff. The opportunity for critical reflection is also enhanced by the completion of staff module reviews the feedback for which is comprehensive.

2.36 The team found that the demonstrable link between strategy and practice, effective processes for critical self-reflection and supporting transition helps to ensure that Expectation B3 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 College's Learning and Teaching Strategy sets out to develop students' 'intellectual and cognitive competencies, their practical abilities to perform their duties in their professional lives and their dispositional attitude of serving others'. The College identifies that as a small institution its 'relational approach' is key to achieving this.

2.38 The team found that the clear strategic framework, suitable arrangements for supporting transition, efforts to improve resources, range and availability of support services and sessions designed to strengthen graduate employability are sufficient to enable Expectation B4 to be met.

2.39 The review team tested this Expectation by meeting staff and students. The team also read strategy documents, policies, committee minutes and information provided for students about the College's support services.

2.40 The team found that arrangements for supporting students with disabilities are appropriate. Staff were able to provide examples of adjustments to the College estate for students on placement, and for students whose disability poses significant difficulties in accessing routine classroom-based activities. The College portal has also been revised recently to take account of students with disabilities. Students confirmed that the recent introduction of a Disability Support Officer has improved support.

2.41 Students spoke highly about the support they receive from library staff. Student requests are handled transparently and expeditiously, and postgraduate students receive tailored support. Staff informed the team that the introduction of Academic Board has helped to ensure that the library is informed about module changes and can therefore plan accordingly.

2.42 The College actively seeks to engage students in extra and co-curricular activities designed to enhance students' studies and their graduate prospects in addition to those embedded within the curriculum. Students studying Performing Arts are encouraged to audition for summer tours and external practitioners have been introduced, along with productions, to provide students with greater exposure to their discipline and the industry. Students on the Youth Track are also given the opportunity to attend the Elim national youth festival. The review team considers the very effective arrangements and supportive ethos that enables the academic and personal development of students to be **good practice**.

2.43 The Vice Principal and Pastoral Dean deliver seminars for final year students that are designed to help them prepare for life beyond graduation. These reflective sessions include role-play exercises for interview situations and advice on CV-writing. At earlier levels the College's Careers Pathway document helps detail the support and assistance available for students. Students informed the team that although these features were positive aspects of their programme they would welcome more opportunities and for them to be better communicated. The College acknowledged that attendance was very low and that more needed to be done in order to ensure that students recognised the importance of these activities. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to engage students in opportunities that enhance employability.

2.44 The team found that despite low engagement from students with some opportunities designed to enhance student employability, the College is aware of the need to strengthen communication in the area. This awareness combined with effective and valued support from library and disability support staff ensures that Expectation B4 is met and the level of associated 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

2.45 The College approaches student engagement through both formal and informal means, the latter being facilitated by the small size of the College and its role as a theological training college. Evidence of its past success in engaging students in their education can be seen in the recognition of direct engagement with students during timetabling of teaching and assessment scheduling identified by the 2014 QAA Review for Specific Course Designation and the subsequent actions identified in the QAA monitoring visit in 2016. The approach to student engagement has been augmented by the recent appointment of a Pastoral Dean who reviewed student engagement resulting in a revised Caring Community Student Handbook.

2.46 The Student Representative Council (SRC) represents students on all levels of its programmes and its members are elected by their peers using a transparent and documented process. Representatives from the SRC sit on the Undergraduate Programme Committee which also includes a representative elected by part-time students. The MA students also elect representatives to the postgraduate programme committee, and the senior representative on the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme Committees represents the students at Academic Board. Postgraduate research (PGR) students may have a representative on the Postgraduate Programme Committee and in recent years a PGR student has represented the postgraduates at Academic Board. A comprehensive document provides guidance on the role of student representatives on academic committees.

2.47 The SRC discusses a wide range of topics relating to the wider College life as well as the learning environment, and the Pastoral Dean holds meetings with the SRC chair to address live issues. The SRC meets formally with the College academic and support staff through biannual Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, which include a range of items raised by the students in addition to standing items such as student feedback summaries deriving from the College quality assurance processes.

2.48 Students have the opportunity to provide feedback via online module feedback forms. The forms are compiled into module summaries by the Database Administrator and Academic Registrar and provided to module leaders for comment. The summary information is available for external examiners and the Academic Registrar prepares a very detailed report distilling student and module leader feedback which is used in annual monitoring. In addition to module level feedback, the College collects annual survey forms reflecting on the students' perceptions of their learning experience throughout the academic year and these are summarised into a report by the Pastoral Dean. These reports are presented to the Programme Committee and the SSLC and issues are raised for action from module leaders and changes to delivery of programmes or facilities may result. Students are informed of the main outcomes from the feedback process via summary 'You said, We did' notices posted on the portal or on College notice-boards.

2.49 Informal College mechanisms include tutor meetings, contacts through extracurricular activities and the Wednesday Devotions which provide an opportunity for students to interact with staff and for student representatives to make contact with the student body. The College has decided to develop its use of the VLE to improve student engagement. This is led by the Director of Academic Development and is supported by a

document to encourage staff to develop more interactive content including discussion fora and to use student feedback to guide the process.

2.50 The College demonstrates a clear awareness of the need to engage all students and the mechanisms described above have the potential to enable it to meet Expectation B5.

2.51 Evidence of student engagement and partnership in assurance and enhancement of their educational experience was examined by reading minutes of committees involving students, evaluating the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms and discussing with students and staff their interactions.

2.52 Students the review team met were aware of the channels of communication open to them for engagement with College staff at all levels. The representational structures operated effectively, and student representatives were aware of their roles and responsibilities and had received training from the College. This support is a recent initiative. The team heard that representatives received some support and advice from their peers and formed the opinion that student representation could be strengthened with further development of the training offered by the College. There was evidence that the student voice was heard and current students and alumni were able to influence the content of their curricula and its timetabling as well as learning resources such as the internet bandwidth.

2.53 Feedback mechanisms on programme content and delivery were comprehensive, allowed consideration of the student voice at all levels in the College and provided a documentary basis for quality assurance and curriculum development. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is however compromised to some extent by the very low return of questionnaires in some modules. The College is aware of this problem but initiatives such as requiring students to make a written commitment to provide responses when they submit assessments have only been partly successful. The team is of the opinion that the College should continue to explore ways to ensure its feedback processes are effective. The team also heard that the mechanisms to engage part-time and non-campus based students were less effective than for campus-based students. The College sees developments in tutoring and the use of the VLE as mechanisms to ensure parity of experience between on-campus and other groups of learners.

2.54 The College has clearly built on the good practice identified in the QAA 2014 report and uses its close relationship with its students to engage with them as partners and as such the Expectation is met and the 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

2.55 Responsibility for the standard of assessments and recognition of prior learning lies with the University of Chester. The College is responsible for designing, setting, marking and moderation of assessments. The process is described in the respective College Programme Handbooks, which are reviewed by the University at the start of each academic year.

2.56 Internal moderation of assessments is undertaken by Academic Board, with external scrutiny being provided by external examiners. Assessments are graded according to University grading criteria. Marking is monitored and moderated when procedures require this. All course work is submitted electronically to the College via Turnitin.

2.57 Exam board procedures are set out in the University Handbook. Module assessment boards are held at College and chaired by a University Academic Link Tutor, with external examiners in attendance to comment on process. The Final Award Board is held at the University with no College involvement. The College receives marks after the final meeting.

2.58 The arrangements for the assessment of students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The review team discussed the operation of assessment with staff and students, reviewed assessment policies and procedures, considered external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports and studied minutes of relevant committees.

2.60 The team found the University Handbook provided detailed and comprehensive information on its assessment requirements. This included clear and effective guidance on module descriptors and assessment elements.

2.61 Within this framework the College is responsible for setting, marking and moderation of assessments as described in the College Programme Handbooks. Academic Board undertakes internal moderation of assessments with external moderation being provided by external examiners appointed by the University.

2.62 The College Programme Handbooks were found to give detailed and comprehensive information on the operation of assessments at the College and provide assessment criteria accessible to students. Students also receive guidance on assessments at annual induction events for each year group. The Handbooks were found to be reviewed annually by the University with any changes required to ensure consistency with University procedures being drawn to the attention of the College.

2.63 The College used the 2016 revalidation process to review and make changes to its assessments to align them with the revised Programme Statement and introduction of 20 credit modules across all programmes.

2.64 The team found a robust approach to marking operating throughout the College. Markers must be approved by the University. All markers receive initial training from the

Academic Dean and have an opportunity to second mark work of an experienced marker before marking themselves. Marking is also discussed at annual training days, which the team considered to be very effective at developing staff assessment literacy.

2.65 Assessments are graded according to established University grading criteria. The College provides specific well-structured criteria for performance-based assessments. Staff mark the majority of assessments online via Grade Mark on Turnitin. Marking is monitored by Academic Board and recorded. Internal marking feedback is monitored by the Academic Dean, Academic Board and Programme Committees. An annual assessors and markers training day ensures a consistent approach.

2.66 All marking in the College is either moderated or double marked. Standard forms are available for this that include a Marking Moderation Guide, Mark Sheet, Marking Monitoring Form, and Variation in Marks Form, and are all used to secure the marking process.

2.67 Work is marked and moderated as per College policy and returned within four weeks. Progress of marking is monitored by a faculty administrator to ensure that marking deadlines are met. Students that met the team were satisfied that the College returned marked work within published deadlines. However, there were some occasions when feedback was received after the submission deadline for subsequent assessments. The team noted that the College was aware of this and was currently considering how best to align the timing of assessment submission, marking and feedback.

2.68 Comprehensive University exam board procedures are set out in the University Handbook. Module assessment boards are held at the College, attended by external examiners and chaired by the University Academic Link Tutor. The final awards board is held at the University with no College participation. The team found effective processes in place for responding to students having specific additional assessment needs.

2.69 Marking Monitoring Forms and Module Review Forms allow markers to reflect on student performance and the effectiveness of assessments. Staff also comment on a quantitative analysis of mean and standard deviation for each module. The team considered this an effective tool for monitoring assessments.

2.70 The College uses students in a number of creative ways to support its assessment strategy by having opportunities for students to share good practice through mock examinations followed by presentations from students and subsequent online discussion fora. The team found high levels of engagement from students with discussion boards. Student representatives are also consulted before finalising the submission schedules and volume of assessments for each level. Following the 2016 revalidation panel, the College is currently working to develop a greater variety of assessment types in response to a recommendation from the University. Any requirements that students have for recognising prior learning are picked up during the admissions interview process.

2.71 The College follows University policy for assessments, as required. The review team observed wide-ranging evidence of a careful approach to assessment with good levels of oversight through moderation and second marking. Staff have a reflective approach to developing different assessment approaches. The College involved students in assessments in a number of creative ways. The Expectation is therefore 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

2.72 The University of Chester, as the College's awarding body, is responsible for the appointment of external examiners. In practice the University liaises with the College to discuss suitable personnel. External examiners are appointed for a four-year term which can be extended for a further two years by the University. Training for examiners is provided by the awarding body. The College provides access to the necessary information through its online portal.

2.73 External examiners carry out moderation in line with University regulations and the College submits scripts electronically through a software package. Module Assessment Boards are held at the College prior to Progression and Final Award Boards which are held at the University. External examiners attend these boards and use the opportunity to meet with staff and discuss the programme.

2.74 Following Module Award Boards, external examiners submit an annual report using the University's standard template. The Quality Standards Department at the University receives the report and forwards action points to the College that require addressing. The College provides a response through the annual course monitoring return. This response forms the basis of an action plan overseen by the Academic Dean, Academic Registrar and Academic Board.

2.75 Student representatives are involved in discussions about external examiner reports at the first SSLC of each academic year. They are also involved in discussions at Programme Committees and Academic Board. They are made available to the wider student body through the College portal.

2.76 The team considers that the role of the awarding body in appointing and training external examiners, clear reports and the structured approach to developing action plans are sufficient to enable Expectation B7 to be met.

2.77 The review team tested this Expectation by meeting with staff and students. The team also viewed external examiner reports, assessment board minutes and action plans relating to external examiner feedback.

2.78 The team found that the College was operationalising external examining requirements effectively and in line with the awarding body's regulations. The College was able to provide examples of positive developments emanating from external examiner feedback, such as the introduction of a staff modular feedback form, electronic submission of assessments, development or creative postgraduate assessments and rationalisation of performing arts assessments. Students confirmed that they can access reports and discuss action plans and commentary in annual monitoring reports at programme-level meetings.

2.79 The team concludes that the role of the awarding body, clear process for consideration of external examiner reports, discussion with students and examples of feedback-informed changes to provision help to ensure that Expectation B7 is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.80 The University framework for evaluation, monitoring and review is set out in the University Handbook and is followed by the College. Academic standards are monitored through an annual partnership report. The College also participates in a periodic course review process operated by the University. There is an annual course monitoring return undertaken at programme level for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Comments from external examiner reports are logged, discussed by programme committees and actions taken where necessary.

2.81 Staff feedback is an integral part of the monitoring and review processes. An annual Peer Review of Teaching process provides staff feedback, which is then considered by programme committees throughout the year. Oversight of this process is maintained by Academic Board.

2.82 Module evaluation questionnaires, the SSLC and the Student Representative Council provide opportunities to collect student views which are fed into the monitoring process.

2.83 These processes for programme review and monitoring would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.84 In testing this Expectation, the review team considered a broad range of documentary evidence which included annual monitoring reports, annual partnership reports, periodic review reports, and minutes of relevant committees. The team discussed the operation of programme monitoring and review with staff and students.

2.85 As noted in section A3.3 of this report, the College follows the University of Chester's framework for evaluation, monitoring and review. The University Handbook was found to contain comprehensive information setting out the requirements for, and the operation of, the processes in an appropriate level of detail. Academic standards are monitored effectively through an annual partnership report that also provides the College an opportunity to consider a broad range of statistical data. Academic Board maintains strategic oversight of the different monitoring processes.

2.86 The College completes an annual course monitoring return for each undergraduate and postgraduate programme. The team noted a high level of detailed self-reflection in these documents with specific action points arising; these are commented on by the University Link Tutor and University Head of Department before formal consideration by University committees for approval and a formal response. The team found that the annual monitoring returns and associated responses were used strategically by the College to identify enhancements to College programmes. Follow-up actions are monitored throughout the year by Programme Committees ensuring clear lines of accountability.

2.87 The College has been proactive in seeking feedback from employers, specifically the Elim movement. This has provided the College with helpful information that informs the annual monitoring of programmes. The team noted that employers' views had been influential in shaping aspects of the College provision.

2.88 Module leaders complete a reflective form at the end of each year that considers teaching, learning and assessment approaches. A very comprehensive summary of these is produced by the Academic Registrar which is discussed at SSLC. The team considers this an effective approach that makes a positive contribution to the review process; it also enabled students to see the College's monitoring processes in operation.

2.89 Input from staff is captured through an effective Annual Peer Review of Teaching process. Each member of staff undergoes regular peer review of their teaching with reports being submitted to Programme Committees for consideration. Individual peer-review forms are considered by the Academic Registrar. Summary reports synthesise key issues and are discussed at the annual staff training day.

2.90 From the 2016-17 academic year, the University revised monitoring at partners to use of the same process as that at the University, with a continuous monitoring and evaluation methodology distributed throughout the academic year. The revised method includes more emphasis on a broad range of quantitative data. The College believes that this would help further strengthen its review processes and allow it to be more proactive on shorter timescales. Reporting is supported through the use of a new template. The first round of the new method was completed in October 2017 and provided the team with some preliminary evidence that this approach will deliver the anticipated benefits. As described in sections A3 and B1, the College is also subject to a periodic review event as part of programme revalidation, which with periodic course review will be every three years.

2.91 On the basis of the evidence scrutinised, the review team concludes that there are effective and robust monitoring and review processes in place that assure and enhance the quality of the student learning experience in the College. The team found wide-ranging evidence of self-reflection making an effective contribution to these processes. Furthermore, this approach complies fully with the requirements of the awarding body. 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

2.92 College handbooks contain the procedures for student appeals and complaints. The appeals procedure is that of the University of Chester as the validating partner, and the handbooks contain links directing students to the University's website. Appeals are entirely conducted by the University with the College providing information as required.

2.93 The College's complaints procedure operates in accordance with the formal partnership agreement with the University and was revised by the College's Academic Registrar in 2016 as part of registration with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This revision was made in consultation with the College's leadership team and students and approved by the College Faculty Board. A revised procedure has been implemented for 2017-18.

2.94 The procedure clarifies that academic complaints follow the appeals process of the University as awarding body and identifies four levels of non-academic complaint falling under the College's procedures. Level 2 to 4 complaints require students to contact the Pastoral Dean as the first stage. Where informal resolution at level 2 or 3 is not possible a level 4 formal complaint is submitted by groups or individuals who are current or former students. The complaint is considered by the Pastoral Dean, Academic Dean, Vice Principal or Principal on the basis of the written evidence and only exceptionally will a complaints panel be necessary. At the end of the procedure an outcomes letter is issued identifying that the procedure is exhausted and signposting the student to the OIA if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome. An audit trail of the complaint is maintained by the PA to the Vice Principal.

2.95 The appeals and complaints procedures and the information supporting them follow sector practice and would meet the Expectation.

2.96 The team reviewed the student handbook and revised complaints procedure for 2017 and discussed with students their awareness of the policy. The team also met staff involved in processing and considering student complaints.

2.97 There was clear evidence that the College considers and updates its complaints procedure, which has been recently reviewed by a group chaired by the Vice Principal and has been mapped against the expectations of the Quality Code B9 and revised in the light of good practice examples from OIA. The updated procedure was considered for approval by the College Leadership Team in June 2017.

2.98 Recently the College has also approved an appeals process for unsuccessful applicants. This procedure enables applicants who are dissatisfied with an unsuccessful application to submit an appeal to the Operations Manager. Within 14 days of the receipt of all the required information the Pastoral Dean and another member of the Leadership Team will meet as a panel to consider the appeal and respond within seven days with a decision.

2.99 The team learnt that students at the College had submitted only two complaints and two academic appeals in the last two academic years. Nevertheless, staff explained that they continued to review the provision in the light of complaints and appeals. Students that

the team met confirmed that they knew where to access information regarding complaints and appeals on the College portal.

2.100 The appeals and complaints procedures conform to Expectation B9 and therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.101 The College's arrangements for placement learning have recently been subject to review. A group consisting of the Principal, Vice Principal and Operations Director met in 2017 to review alignment with *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code. The group also approved the Placement Handbook 2017-18 which details arrangements for the management and operation of placement learning.

2.102 Students studying on the Youth, Church Ministry and Theology tracks of the BA (Hons) Applied Theology programme have the opportunity to undertake placements at levels 4, 5 and 6. Students have input into deciding which placement they wish to undertake but the College has ultimate responsibility for identifying, organising and managing placements. The Vice Principal manages placements on the Theology and Church Leadership tracks. Their assistant is responsible for day-to-day operations including student and placement interactions.

2.103 Students wishing to undertake a placement at a new provider must now complete a Placement Request Form. A Placement Setting Application Form is then sent to the placement organisation to collate information on issues such as safeguarding, equal opportunities and health and safety. These forms are followed by a Supervisor Approval Form and Placement Agreement. Should a provider fall into abeyance or an incident be reported the process commences again from the beginning. All students undertaking placements have been subject to a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

2.104 Starting in 2017-18, students will also be required to complete a Student Placement Feedback Form at the end of the placement and there will be a corresponding form for supervisors. Training for supervisors has also been substantially enhanced since September 2017 and supervisors are provided with a copy of the Placement Handbook.

2.105 The team determined that the College's recently strengthened arrangements for the management of placement learning, which include new approval processes, are sufficient to enable Expectation B10 to be met in theory.

2.106 The team tested this Expectation by meeting with staff, students and placement supervisors. The team also viewed the Placement Handbook and documentation relating to the identification and approval of placements.

2.107 The College informed the team that it has taken steps to strengthen its management of work placements, which are now more prominent in the revised curriculum. A placement database will be maintained, and students and supervisors must carry out a specified number of formal meetings, dependent on the length of the placement. A Placement Handbook has also been developed that includes more rigorous procedures for the approval of placement providers. Supervisors confirmed that they are provided with the Handbook and reported to the team that they understood their responsibilities and were well supported. As use of the Handbook is in its first year, there is not yet evidence of the new processes being fully implemented.

2.108 Students informed the team that they found their placements beneficial. They also reported that had they struggled to find a placement they were aware that support was available from the College. Students confirmed that placement supervisors were supportive in the workplace and understood the requirements of the programme.

2.109 The College informed the team that there was still work to be done to ensure they close the feedback loop for supervisors and to revise module feedback forms so they take sufficient account of placement modules. The College also acknowledged that currently there is no formal process to replace a supervisor if they leave the workplace during a student's placement. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. It also **affirms** the steps being taken to formalise the process for work-placement arrangements.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.110 Postgraduate research (PGR) degrees at the College have been validated by the University of Chester since 2011-12 when a PhD/MPhil programme was established, followed in 2013 by an MRes. New agreements between the College and the University, covering PGR programmes were made in July 2017 following revalidation in 2016. Since 2016 when the University disbanded its Graduate School, administrative arrangements covering PGR students have been managed by its Department of Theology and Religious Studies. The College currently has eight MPhil/PhD students and four MRes students although the latter are managed under the awarding partner's regulations for postgraduate taught students.

2.111 The regulations covering research degrees are those of the degree-awarding partner and are fully articulated in a series of handbooks for the guidance of staff and students available on the University of Chester's website. The handbooks set out the roles and responsibilities of staff and students with regard to all aspects of the lifecycle of a PGR student. In addition, the College produces a handbook for MRes students and for PhD students that contains local and specific programme information and a digest of the University's regulations.

2.112 The College's strategy for PGR student education is one of steady, long-term development with the College aspiring to develop its research to serve the wider Pentecostal movement by establishing a Research Centre in Pentecostal Studies. It has demonstrated intent by recently hosting the European Pentecostal Theological Association. Discussion of PGR programmes takes place within the PG Programme Committee and the Academic Dean Research is responsible for raising PGR issues at Academic Board where research student representatives may also contribute.

2.113 Currently two members of staff are eligible to supervise doctoral students although staff are encouraged to be research-active and are supported through application of a policy enabling sabbatical leave. Supervisors have substantial research track records, which are scrutinised by the awarding partner, and have attended training sessions to support their role through the Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University.

2.114 The research culture at the College is augmented by a research seminar series, where doctoral students have an opportunity to present their research to peers and staff. Research-active staff and students have also participated in the University's Theology and Religious Studies Department seminar series.

2.115 The College policy for admissions to PGR programmes is in the College Doctoral Orientation Handbook. Potential applicants for doctoral programmes have exploratory discussions with the Postgraduate Research Dean. The applicant is formally interviewed and the proposed research topic reviewed by the Postgraduate Dean and at least two qualified members of staff who make recommendations to Academic Board on the suitability of the

candidate and the research proposal. Where acceptance is recommended within the College, the completed application and topic are affirmed to the University who are responsible for final approval.

2.116 Training for supervisors is provided through the Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University and sessions include workshops on relevant topics in a theological context. At the start of a doctoral student's programme, supervisors and students carry out a skills audit to identify any specific training needs for the student and recommend appropriate training, which is recorded using a template from the University. Students have opportunities to contribute to teaching within the College and may be appointed as designated tutors by the University.

2.117 Supervision requirements and annual progress monitoring are defined by the University. The College monitors progress continually and through annual progress meetings and these are formally recorded on a University template providing the student, the College and the University with a comprehensive record of progress and training.

2.118 The processes in place at the College in addition to the regulations required by the University of Chester would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.119 To evaluate the environment in which the College provides PGR programmes, the review team examined documents including the handbooks containing PGR regulations and discussed the provision with staff involved in PGR supervision and management as well as PGR students.

2.120 The scale of the PGR operation does present some challenges due to the small number of research supervisors. The relationship with the Department of Theological and Religious Studies at the University is seen as very supportive and is helpful in meeting these challenges. The College is actively seeking ways to expand the number of qualified supervisors through potential partnerships with other providers.

2.121 Students met by the team confirmed that they had been well supported and their training needs had been effectively met, both with regard to their research but also in their wider role in teaching and tutoring where significant training had been provided both at the College and through the University. It was apparent to the team that PhD students are regarded as an important and integral part of the College's learning community.

2.122 The review team concludes that the positive and supportive research environment and the close working relationships of staff and students meant that despite the small scale of the PGR provision the College was able to meet the Expectation and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.124 There are eleven Expectations in this area of which all are applicable to the College. All are met with a low level of risk.

2.125 The review team identified three features of good practice and made two affirmations.

2.126 The features of good practice in this area are concerned with Expectations B2, B3 and B4.

2.127 The first feature of good practice at Expectation B2, relates to the highly effective use of contextualised individual admission interviews enabling the College to assess students' suitability for admission.

2.128 The review team's second feature of good practice at Expectation B3 is concerned with the strategic and comprehensive approach to developing students' knowledge, spirituality and practical skills. This feature of good practice also informs the review team judgement in Enhancement.

2.129 The final feature of good practice at Expectation B4 relates to the very effective arrangements and supportive ethos which enables the academic and personal development of students.

2.130 The first affirmation, at Expectation B4, relates to the steps being taken by the College to engage students in opportunities that enhance employability.

2.131 The review team's second affirmation at Expectation B10 is concerned with the steps being taken to formalise the process for work-placement arrangements.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The collaboration agreement between the College and the University of Chester identifies that the College is responsible for producing and maintaining its published information to comply with the requirements of its degree-awarding partner who is responsible for their approval.

3.2 The College does not have a publishing policy but complies with the University requirements on published materials and is responsible for submitting published materials including student handbooks to the University. The University routinely examines the information on the College website and may ask for corrections if identified. Internally, responsibility for the accuracy of information lies with the Marketing Manager overseen by the Operations Director. There is shared responsibility for the correctness of academic information between the Academic Deans, Academic Department Heads and the Academic Registrar. The Pastoral Dean in conjunction with the SRC has been working to improve dissemination of information through social media platforms.

3.3 The main source of information for the public, prospective, current and past students and staff is the well-designed and informative College website. This is easy to navigate and through it the College sets out its mission, details of its validation arrangement, QAA course designation and other information of relevance to the public at large on an 'Our College' page.

3.4 Prospective applicants can find information about the programmes offered and the modes of study available and the application and admissions process. This includes 'Just Looking' open days that provide an opportunity to find out more about the programmes and facilities. Information is also available in brochure form. The website presents information for current and prospective students about College life and a student tab provides a link to the VLE and student email system.

3.5 The website has information about programmes and their constituent modules but for registered students the majority of programme information, administrative detail and learning support material is held on the VLE as well as mechanisms for electronic submission and module feedback. Programme specifications and module descriptors are also found on the VLE as well as being accessible from the University website. External examiner reports and responses to them are accessible to students through the VLE.

3.6 Student handbooks for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and postgraduate research students contain useful and comprehensive content regarding the learning and teaching ethos of the College, general academic advice and programme information. Some handbooks are also available through the VLE.

3.7 The University is responsible for the production of Award Certificates and Diploma Supplements documenting the student's record of achievement.

3.8 The College's published information and the arrangements for its production would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.9 The review team examined evidence from the College's website, programme and student handbooks and the VLE, and also met staff involved in the production and maintenance of the published information as well as gaining the views of students.

3.10 The team heard that the College has invested significant resource in developing internal databases, updated the website and overhauled the VLE. These changes should enable the College to develop and widen learning opportunities to context-based students, to deliver its teaching and learning strategy more effectively and respond to external data requirements.

3.11 Students found advice for potential applicants to be useful and particularly praised the 'Just Looking' open days. They also recognised the improvements in the VLE and regarded it as a useful and developing resource.

3.12 The team discussed with College staff the arrangements for ensuring currency and consistency of its published materials and found that although there was no formal publication policy there were clearly understood responsibilities for the production and cross-checking of information and that these processes, and their review, were informed by the cycle of annual admissions.

3.13 While the review team found the College's procedures and processes sufficient, it considers that the increasing complexity of information channels within the College, such as the continued enrichment of the website alongside the development of the VLE and the increased use of social media platforms, would be likely to require more robust processes to maintain their future consistency supported by a formal policy identifying responsibilities and timelines for information management.

3.14 In conclusion, the review team considers that published information produced by the College is rich in content, consistent, accessible and fit for purpose. It meets the Expectation and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.15 In reaching its judgements on 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. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

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

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The Leadership Team and Academic Board have primary responsibility for the College's strategic approach to enhancement. In 2016 the College produced an updated Learning and Teaching Strategy and a Higher Education Strategy, which articulate a firm commitment to continual improvements to the College's provision.

4.2 The College operates a continuous programme of monitoring and review as described in section B8. In addition to assuring the quality and standard of the College's provision this also serves as a source of regular information, which is used to enhance the learning opportunities provided by the College. The Academic Registrar has a key role in this enhancement process. The cycle of assurance reporting, which include planned actions in response to annual monitoring reports, results in both individuals and committees taking informed and deliberate steps to enhance provision. This is managed by the Academic Registrar who is responsible for having standing items devoted to enhancement on committee agendas.

4.3 This framework and associated processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team discussed the operation of enhancement with College students, staff and employers. The review team also considered a broad range of documentation including strategy documents, minutes of meetings, and annual monitoring documentation.

4.5 Under the leadership of the current Principal, appointed in 2015, the Leadership Team and Academic Board revised the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy and HE Strategy. This had a number of significant consequences for the College, described below. The revised HE Strategy recognises the importance of the wider context in which the College operates as providing education and training for the Elim movement. Since its establishment in 2104, Academic Board has played an important role in overseeing enhancements across the College.

4.6 The revised Learning and Teaching Strategy describes a new philosophy of education expressed by the College as 'heads, hands and hearts' placing emphasis on the intellectual, professional and spiritual development of all students. The review team considers this to be a clear, appropriate and effective articulation of the College's mission and also observed widespread awareness of this philosophy among staff and students. This had contributed to a positive enabling culture within the College where the concept of continual improvement was widely accepted as applying to students, staff and learning opportunities.

4.7 Within this new framework the College has undertaken a major reorganisation of the structure of its undergraduate programmes which now have a common 20-credit framework, an increased emphasis on vocational skills, the introduction of different ministry tracks within each programme, and increased opportunities for placements. The Academic Deans have led on this with oversight from Academic Board. Other aspects of the new approach include more emphasis on formative assessment and more student-led learning opportunities. Furthermore, two different modes of delivery have been introduced from 2017/18 onwards as campus based and context based. The campus-based delivery is available on a full-time residential basis. The context-based mode of delivery is available

on a full-time or part-time basis and consists of five-week intensive blocks of teaching full-time or 10-week blocks of teaching part-time. In addition, all students are offered placement opportunities to develop their skills in a ministry environment.

4.8 The team considers this new approach to be a creative and innovative response to the needs of the different types of students studying at the College, which recognises the need to be sensitive to the different environments in which they worked and studied. It will also serve to strengthen the contribution the College makes in fulfilling its key role as training and preparation for ministry, while also making its programmes accessible to a wider range of applicants.

4.9 Other factors in the College that contribute to enhancement are the robust processes for monitoring, review and revalidation, as described in sections B8 and B1. The team noted that the requirement to produce a Critical Commentary had been used in a very constructive manner by the College to engender widespread discussion among staff and students about the nature and purpose of the different learning opportunities. External examiner reports were also used regularly as a basis on which to enhance provision.

4.10 Greater use of electronic submission and marking of assignments had made the operation of assessments more efficient. Increasing use of digital technologies and investment in digital infrastructure had enabled academic staff to embrace different technology-enhanced approaches to learning. This was supported by the Director of Academic Development undertaking further training in digital technologies.

4.11 The annual Staff Professional Development Review process, operated by the Vice-Principal, results in individual staff development plans to further enhance their teaching. The team found a high level of engagement with this process and a clear commitment demonstrated from staff to continually improve their teaching and develop new student-centred learning approaches.

4.12 For postgraduate programmes, both PGT and PGR, the College has recognised that its links with the Elim organisation and co-location with the Elim movement headquarters provides significant opportunities to access a wide variety of resources to enrich learning opportunities for postgraduate students. The College is actively considering how this can be developed in a sustainable manner.

4.13 The residential nature of the student body and the resulting close-knit community that incorporates both staff and students provides numerous opportunities for informal student engagement. The team found that the positive culture that existed within the College contributed to ongoing enhancement activity with the role of the Pastoral Dean important in this regard. The team heard from students that they recognised the importance of their role in supporting the College's enhancement work. Students were also able to give examples of the impact of the supportive environment offered by the College, its staff and other students which had resulted in significant life-changing experiences.

4.14 The review team concludes that the College has a deeply held, widespread and effective commitment to enhancement. The team observed enhancement-related activity to be well embedded in College processes and enabled further by the very positive culture that exists in the College community. The team identified a number of examples of good practice in the College, in particular under Expectation B3, which arise in part from an effective approach to enhancement in the College. The review team 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

4.15 In reaching its judgements on the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified within the Quality Coode, summarised in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

4.16 There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this area. However, the features of good practice identified at Expectation B3, the strategic and comprehensive approach to developing students' knowledge, spirituality and practical skills, informs the judgement in this area.

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

Glossary

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

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

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.

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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