



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Fairfield School of Business Ltd

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 Fairfield School of Business Ltd. The review took place from 15 to 17 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Carol Vielba
- Mr Fazal Dad
- Ms Sarah d'Ambrumenil.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

### Good practice

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

- The highly effective work of the Academic Support Department, which enables HND students to complete their qualification in a timely manner (Expectation B4).
- The wide range of personalised support, which enables a diverse body of students to reach their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

### Recommendations

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

By July 2018:

- ensure the alignment of academic policies, practices and procedures with the governance framework (Expectation A2.1)
- review and implement appropriate changes to its policies, procedures and guidance in relation to mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct, reasonable adjustments and recognition of prior learning, to ensure coherence and equitable treatment of students (Expectation B6)
- ensure staff are fully familiar with the complaints and appeals processes of the awarding body (Expectation B9)
- formalise the process for the effective oversight of complaints and appeals (Expectation B9)
- ensure all published information is accurate and trustworthy (Expectation C).

By September 2018:

- put in place formal policies, processes and guidance for the design, development, approval and amendment of modules and programmes (Expectation B1)
- develop and implement opportunities for employers, external experts and students to contribute to the design and development of modules and programmes (Expectation B1)
- fully implement its policy to include student feedback in module monitoring review reports (Expectation B5)
- further strengthen the effectiveness of its engagement with students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5)
- ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review processes (Expectation B8)

- strengthen School-level planning processes by developing clear targets and timelines for the implementation of agreed objectives (Enhancement)
- strengthen the link between the outcomes of quality assurance processes and School-level decision making (Enhancement).

## About the provider

Fairfield School of Business Ltd (the School) was established in 2006 as London Education and Training Services, later named Fairfield Academy. The main programme offered at that time was English for Speakers of Other Languages. Following a change in ownership in 2012, the Academy was renamed Fairfield School of Business Ltd. At the same time, it redirected its focus towards higher education and commenced delivery of the Pearson (Edexcel) BTEC level 5 HND in Business. In 2016, London Metropolitan University validated three BA/BSc (Hons) top-up programmes and three foundation degrees in Business, Hospitality Management, and Public Health and Health Promotion for delivery by the School.

The School operates from two campuses, one in Katherine Street, Croydon, and one at Alperton House, Wembley. The School is registered with the Student Loan Company. At the time of the review, only the HND Business, the Foundation Degree in Business and the BA (Hons) Business top-up programme were operational. The last two are delivered at Alperton House.

The School's mission is to provide a supportive and inspiring student experience that is inclusive, seeks to reduce barriers to learning, and equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to progress into further study or employment. The student body is made up almost entirely of mature local students who under-achieved at school and have few formal academic qualifications. Many have been out of education for some years. A total of 635 students are currently registered to study at the various programmes; 560 are enrolled on the HND Business, 55 on the BA (Hons) Business top-up and 20 on the Foundation Degree in Business, which started in January and September 2017 respectively. The School employs 34 academic and support staff, with 31 staff being full-time and three part-time.

The last QAA Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation took place in 2013. It identified four areas of good practice and made six desirable recommendations, which were incorporated in an action plan. The School has built on the good practice and addressed the recommendations, some of which require further work (see recommendations under Expectations A2.1 and B1).

## 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 School delivers its higher education provision in partnership with Pearson and London Metropolitan University. The School does not have degree awarding powers and overall responsibility for the setting of academic standards of the School's higher education provision is retained by its awarding partners.

1.2 The Higher National programme the School offers is designed and approved by Pearson. The School is approved to deliver the qualification and maintains academic standards through appropriate programme delivery and assessment procedures. Programme specifications provide guidance for teaching, learning and assessment of students at the appropriate level.

1.3 In the case of London Metropolitan University, the academic agreement defines the School's responsibilities for the management and quality assurance of University validated higher education programmes. The University is responsible for validating higher education programmes and ensures that the approved qualifications are at the appropriate level of the

FHEQ, and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. It also ensures that the programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptors, are named in accordance with titling conventions and frameworks, and that qualifications mark the achievement of programme learning outcomes. The University quality assurance procedures and the School's internal procedures ensure that academic standards are consistently maintained. The approach taken by the School in respect of the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team scrutinised the School's processes and their effectiveness for maintaining academic standards through consideration of quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme documentation, and meetings with staff and students.

1.5 Pearson's BTEC Higher National programmes are benchmarked to levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ. This ensures that the qualification delivered at the School is correctly positioned at the national framework for higher education provision. Similarly, Pearson's quality assurance system for Higher National programmes, which the School fully implements, ensures that assessment outcomes are to national standards. It also ensures that the School has effective quality assurance processes for the assessment of learning outcomes, and monitoring and review of programme delivery. Academic managers and teaching staff have a clear understanding of the FHEQ and its implications for programme delivery and assessment. The programme team works closely with the Pearson external examiner to ensure that the School's delivery and assessment of the programme is consistent with national standards. External examiner reports confirm that the School effectively maintains the academic standards set for the award.

1.6 For University programmes, validation reports confirm alignment with the FHEQ, and consideration of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The University's quality manual, which the School follows, has been designed to support the maintenance of appropriate academic standards. Although the provision has not gone through a full academic cycle yet, the University confirms that the School fulfils its responsibility with regard to programme delivery and assessment.

1.7 The School has robust processes in place to maintain the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.8 The School operates within the academic regulations of London Metropolitan University and Pearson. These are complemented by the School's own Assessment Policy, which outlines the purposes and principles that guide assessment across all higher education programmes, and identifies where responsibilities for assessment reside. For Pearson provision, the processes for internal verification of assessments are determined by Pearson quality assurance guidelines and the School has developed its own Internal Verification Policy. The School has academic governance structures in place that are designed to support the implementation of the academic frameworks and regulations. Responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the School's policies lies with the Executive Committee. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.9 The review team scrutinised the School's implementation of the academic frameworks and regulations set by its awarding body and organisation, and evaluated the effectiveness of School policies and procedures through consideration of the academic governance structures, quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, and in meetings with senior and academic staff and students.

1.10 Staff and students have a clear understanding of the academic regulations that govern the various programmes the School delivers. Regulations are signposted in staff and student handbooks. Key elements such as regulations on passing of qualifications, extenuating circumstances, academic offences and referencing requirements are also outlined to students during their induction. They are further reinforced by their personal tutors and programme teams during the orientation week. External examiner reports and Pearson Academic Management Reports confirm that the School operates within the prescribed academic framework, and consistently implements its assessment and internal verification policies. No formal reports are available yet for University provision.

1.11 The School's academic governance arrangements, including the membership and terms of reference of committees, boards and panels are set out in a governance document. However, the terms of reference, chairing and membership of committees do not always align with practice. For example, minutes of committees, boards and panels show that chairing and membership of some assessment-related committees and panels is not as stipulated in the governance document, which has the potential to jeopardise independent decision making and fair treatment of students (see Expectations B6 and B9). Furthermore, the business of some committees does not cover the full terms of reference, thus hampering the School's ability to maintain effective oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. For example, the terms of reference of the Academic Board state that it considers and approves the School's key academic strategies. The minutes of the committee do not evidence that it discharges this responsibility. It does not always have a structured agenda and operates as an institutional-level staff-student liaison committee, with staff reporting on plans and proposals and students raising issues of concern. Similarly, the Students' Union Committee is responsible for the student survey and for analysing, referring and proposing actions of matters raised as appropriate, but there is no evidence in the minutes of the committee that this occurs. The review team **recommends** that the School ensure the alignment of academic policies, practices and procedures with

the governance framework.

1.12 The School adequately operates and implements the academic frameworks and regulations specified by the awarding body and awarding organisation. However, the academic governance structure that supports the implementation does not operate fully as intended and may impede effective oversight of academic standards and quality. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**



**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 definitive record of each programme delivered by the School is maintained by the relevant awarding partner in the form of programme and qualification specifications; any changes must be agreed by the relevant partner in line with its policies. For Pearson provision, the School has developed customised programme specifications based on the qualification specification, which reflect the units delivered by the School. Any changes to the programmes are recorded through the School's module and annual programme evaluation and monitoring processes. Records of achievement are also maintained by the awarding body and awarding organisation, and the School keeps records of students' achievement on its virtual learning environment (VLE). These processes would allow the Expectation to be met, ensuring that a single definitive record is maintained by the awarding body and awarding organisation, with external procedures in place to update the definitive record where necessary.

1.14 The review team tested the Expectation by considering the information provided in the student handbooks and validating partner guidance documents, and in discussion with students and staff.

1.15 The School provides a copy of the definitive record within handbooks, which are used as reference points for both students and staff. There is clear guidance from London Metropolitan University about changes to existing programmes, and staff are fully aware of the processes required for amending the definitive records. As the programmes have only recently started, these processes have yet to be utilised.

1.16 Key responsibilities for the maintenance of the definitive record are held by the awarding body and organisation, and the School is aware of how to use their processes to make changes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.17 The higher education programmes that the School delivers are designed, developed and approved using the policies and processes of its awarding partners. The School has policies and processes to approve programmes, which have been designed to ensure that academic standards meet UK thresholds, and are in accordance with its academic frameworks and regulations. The School is responsible for developing teaching materials at an appropriate level and for the delivery of programmes in line with its awarding partners' academic frameworks. The School's overall approach to programme design, development and approval is discussed in detail under Expectation B1. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 In order to assess the effectiveness of the procedures for approval of programmes delivered at the School, the review team examined a range of documents including policies, quality manuals, external reports, provider agreements and mapping of responsibilities, and programme specifications. The team also met staff with responsibility for, and involvement in, programme approval.

1.19 The School has mapped its practice against Expectation A3.1 of the Quality Code. Although the School claims that it has no role in respect of this Expectation, it is, nevertheless, responsible for the subsequent design of materials to deliver approved learning outcomes at appropriate levels and for proposing amendments to ensure that standards continue to be met. With respect to both Pearson and London Metropolitan University provision, the School uses programme and module specifications developed by its awarding partners. The specifications take account of UK threshold academic standards for the qualifications involved and partners' own academic frameworks and regulations. University programme approval processes are rigorous and include external experts. Teaching materials and assessments developed at the School are subject to peer moderation through the internal verification process and the role of module and programme leaders. They are also subject to awarding partner review and moderation through the external examiner system, and the work of Pearson external verifiers and University link tutors. Currently, the School does not have formal programme or module approval processes. This is discussed further under Expectation B1, where the review team outlines the view that such processes should be developed in order to mitigate any future risk to the quality of learning opportunities, and makes a recommendation to this effect.

1.20 The programme approval policies and processes of its awarding partners ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of both the School and its awarding partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is 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**

1.21 The School undertakes assessment of student performance within the academic framework and regulations of its awarding partners. Its role in assessment is largely similar with respect to both awarding partners. The School is responsible for setting assessments, first and second-marking, and giving feedback to students on their work. Awarding partners maintain oversight of assessment; appoint external examiners, who moderate student work; and have processes in place to assure the integrity of decisions on the award of credit and qualifications. Details of the policies and processes involved can be found under Expectation B6. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22 In order to assess the effectiveness of the School's policies and procedures for assessment of learning outcomes, the review team examined School and awarding partner policies and regulations; the School's mapping of its practice; reports by Pearson on the practice of assessment at the School; and the terms of reference and minutes of internal assessment boards and panels. The team also met staff responsible for the practice and oversight of assessment.

1.23 The School has mapped its practice against Expectation A3.2 of the Quality Code and states that, because it is not itself an awarding body, the section is not relevant. This view does not take account of the extensive role that the School has in designing, setting, marking and moderating assessments for both its awarding partners. The School's approach to assessment is discussed in detail under Expectation B6.

1.24 The School has its own assessment regulations, which are designed to work within its awarding partners' frameworks. The most recent Pearson external examiner and Academic Management Reports confirm that its assessment processes for the Higher National programme align with Pearson expectations. Assessment design is appropriate for testing learning outcomes and both varied and relevant to practice. The reports also confirm that marking and internal verification are effective, and the recording of marks is secure. Assessment boards are formally constituted as required and effectively assure that candidates have met all requirements before credit or qualifications are recommended to the awarding partner.

1.25 Assessment boards for London Metropolitan University validated provision are run by the University. It appoints a link tutor to each programme, who moderates proposed assessments. External examiners moderate student work after it has been marked by the School, in order to provide assurance that learning outcomes and UK threshold standards are met.

1.26 Overall, the School's processes and procedures for assessment for Pearson and University programmes are effective. Although aspects of the School's assessment policies and practice require attention (the handling of mitigating circumstances, academic

misconduct, reasonable adjustment and recognition of prior learning) in order to be clear and consistent (see Expectation B6), the robust policies and processes of its awarding partners ensure that standards are assured across all programmes.

1.27 The School, in working with its awarding partners, operates processes for the assessment of learning outcomes that ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded where UK and awarding partner standards have been met. The review team concludes that 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**

1.28 The policies and processes used by the School for the annual monitoring and review of its provision are designed to check whether UK threshold standards have been achieved and that the academic standards of awarding partners are being met. The School monitors and reviews its HND provision annually at module, programme and institutional level. The Annual Programme Monitoring Report prepared by the School for Pearson includes commentary on academic standards. Annual reports on its performance are received from Pearson. The Pearson appointed standards verifier provides a commentary on the quality and standards of the School's provision. The reports include an evaluation of the School's management of academic standards and the effectiveness of assessment. In addition, Pearson provides a commentary on the School's systems for assuring standards and assessment practice in its Academic Management Reports. The School does not have a process for periodic review of its HND provision. School processes and procedures for monitoring and review are described in detail under Expectation B8.

1.29 London Metropolitan University has clearly articulated its expectations for the monitoring and review of its programmes. Monitoring of University validated provision has not yet commenced. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30 In order to assess the effectiveness of the School's procedures for monitoring and review, the review team examined the School's mapping of its practice, policy documents, handbooks and templates. The team also examined samples of monitoring reports, both internal and external, and met staff responsible for, and involved in, monitoring and review.

1.31 The School has mapped its practice against Expectation A3.3 of the Quality Code. Although the School claims that it has no role in respect of this Expectation, it nevertheless operates policies and processes that provide support to its awarding partners, which have ultimate responsibility for securing the academic standards of the School's provision. For the HND, the School prepares detailed annual monitoring reports at module and programme level. These reports effectively analyse student performance in comparison with previous cohorts and include reflection on the currency and appropriateness of learning outcomes and teaching materials. Pearson external reports appropriately inform internal monitoring reports.

1.32 The systems in place for monitoring and review of provision validated by the University are starting to become operational. Module monitoring reports (MMRs) in the form of module logs use assessment data and external examiner comments to track, evaluate and improve student achievement. At programme level, course logs will include a comparison of student performance and outcomes from the School with subject, faculty and University-wide data.

1.33 The School, with the support of its awarding partners, operates effective monitoring and review processes that evaluate whether UK threshold standards are being achieved, and the academic standards of the School's awarding partners are being maintained.

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

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.34 The School's main source of external and independent expertise in maintaining academic standards are the external examiners and verifiers appointed by its awarding partners. The roles and responsibilities of external examiners, including consideration of reports, are clearly defined in Pearson and London Metropolitan University documentation. The School uses awarding partner reports as a source of evidence for other quality assurance activities, such as programme monitoring. The School also make use of external guest speakers in the delivery of programmes. The University ensures that independent external expertise is used in programme approval and periodic review. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35 In considering this Expectation the review team examined external examiner reports, minutes of relevant committees and programme monitoring reports. The team also met senior and academic staff to understand how external input is used to maintain academic standards.

1.36 The College follows the University and Pearson expectations for the use of external examiner reports. External examiner reports are considered at Programme Committee meetings and by the Academic Board, and recommendations and comments feed appropriately into the annual programme monitoring and review process. Staff are familiar with the processes. The School has plans to increase the use of external guest speakers in the delivery of programmes. The programme validation report for University provision confirms that external experts were appropriately involved in the approval of programmes.

1.37 In line with the extent of its responsibilities, the School makes appropriate use of external expertise in the maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

1.39 All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met, and the associated level of risk is low for six. One Expectation has a moderate risk and attracted a recommendation with regard to the alignment of academic policies, practices and procedures with the governance framework. There are no affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

1.40 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation at the School **meets** UK expectations.



## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The School's awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for the formal approval of new modules and programmes, and the amendment of existing ones. The School's responsibilities are limited and include the development of the teaching materials and assessments needed to deliver approved modules and programmes. The School does not have formal policies and processes for the design, development, approval and amendment of provision, and instead uses those of its awarding partners. Implementation of these policies and process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2 To test the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place at the School, the review team examined policy documents, quality handbooks, the School's mapping of its practice against the Quality Code, and documentation associated with the approval of a suite of new programmes by London Metropolitan University. The team also read committee terms of reference and minutes, and met staff responsible for, and involved in, programme design and approval.

2.3 The School recognises that although its awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for programme design and approval, it is also involved in elements of these processes and has mapped its practice against Expectation B1 of the Quality Code. The mapping indicates that responsibility for policies and processes lies with senior management, the programme leader and the Quality Unit. The School's quality handbook does not contain any policies, processes or guidance for the design, development and approval of provision. The School states that decisions on the introduction of new programmes are taken by the Executive Committee, prior to submission for external approval, on the basis of a position paper, following discussion by the Management Board and Academic Board. Once a decision to introduce a new programme has been taken, the academic team confirms the processes to be employed for the development to meet awarding body standards and requirements. Changes to programmes are to be considered and approved by the Academic Board prior to submission for external approval.

2.4 The initial decision to pursue partnership for selected programmes with the University was approved by the Executive Committee. At various times during validation, briefings were received by the Executive Committee, Academic Board and other committees, but no requirements for formal approval of materials were evident in documents seen by the team. The School did not have any direct involvement in the academic design and development of the top-up and foundation degree programmes recently approved by the University. The new programmes are customised versions of existing University programmes and the academic development was led by a senior academic at a sister institution. Programme and module specifications were provided by the University and programme approval followed the University procedures. Following programme approval, academic staff at the School participated in the development of teaching materials for verification by the programme leader and University for final approval.

2.5 The School's role in the development and approval of Pearson provision is equally limited. The School's role with regard to Pearson provision involves the design of effective learning materials, teaching strategies and assessments that allow the learning outcomes specified by Pearson to be met. The School does not offer any locally devised units within its HND provision and it selects the units it intends to deliver from a menu offered by Pearson. The School undertook a review of its unit choice when Pearson moved from accreditation by the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the Regulated Qualifications Framework. The draft academic staff handbook for the HND programme incorporates general principles for programme development, change and approval, and states that HND programmes are to be reviewed in Programme Committees and any recommendation of changes will be raised with the Academic Board.

2.6 In relation to the HND, the School regularly reviews and modifies learning materials to ensure continued relevance and validity. With respect to University-validated provision, the School follows University procedures for the amendment of programmes, which are specified in its quality manual. Although modifications to modules and programmes are made by the University, these will take account of feedback from the School. As the programmes have not yet completed a full academic year, the School has yet to suggest any amendments.

2.7 The School has undertaken little programme design and development activity to date, but is able to manage amendments to existing programmes in practice. In view of the planned expansion of the academic portfolio, the review team **recommends** that the School put in place formal policies, processes and guidance for the design, development, approval and amendment of modules and programmes.

2.8 There have been no opportunities for employers to contribute to the development of the foundation degrees, even though they contain mandatory work placement elements. The School confirmed that employers, professional support staff, and students were not involved in the design and development of the new top-up programmes. The University's final approval process, however, included discussions with students. To ensure the currency and validity of future academic provision, the review team **recommends** that the School develop and implement opportunities for employers, external experts and students to contribute to the design and development of modules and programmes.

2.9 The School's use of its awarding partners' formal processes for the design, development, approval and amendment of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met. However, the lack of formal internal policies and procedures in this area, and the lack of opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in programme development, is a source of risk as the School seeks to develop its provision at new levels and with new partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.10 Prospective students are made aware of the programmes of study available at the School through a number of sources. The School has a web presence and it undertakes marketing campaigns in the local area. The School has an Admissions Policy, which sets out its approach to, and principles for, the admission and enrolment of students. Applicants are supported and guided through the process by a dedicated admissions team. A handbook for admissions staff provides guidance on the admissions process. The School allows entry with advanced standing and has an Accreditation of Prior Experience Policy to facilitate this. All applicants have to submit a written application with supporting evidence and undergo an interview. Unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal an admissions decision. The admissions team regularly reviews the admissions process and invites student feedback. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the School's admissions policy and procedures, and met senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.12 The School's Admissions Policy covers admission to both Pearson and London Metropolitan University validated provision. It was approved by the University as part of the institutional approval process, and adheres to the principles of fair admission. The Admissions Policy is available to staff on the School's VLE. It is well understood and implemented appropriately. Admissions decisions are made based on applicants' previous qualifications and experience and motivation to study. Admission to the School's programmes is a multi-stage process and includes an initial consultation or open day where prospective students are informed about the programmes, entry requirements, the admissions process and funding. Following this, applicants attend an assessment day where they complete their application form, undertake relevant tests, for example in English language and numeracy, and have an interview with an academic member of staff. Students who declare a disability or other special support needs have an additional interview with a member of support staff to determine the level of support needed and whether the School can adequately support the student.

2.13 In addition to local marketing activities and information of the website, the School works with two recruitment agencies and financially incentivises students to recommend friends to study at the School. These processes are only used to introduce prospective students to the School, and all applicants are required to go through the full admissions process described above. Students who met the review team confirmed that the admissions process was transparent and that they were well supported throughout the process. Unsuccessful applicants are able to appeal against admission decisions or raise complaints about the application of the admissions procedure. They are made aware of the procedures for doing so during open days and during the initial consultation.

2.14 The admissions team evaluates the admissions process after each intake, taking into account student feedback. This departmental evaluation enables the admissions team to implement minor changes that impact on the applicant experience. However, there is no

formal report to the Admissions Committee, which is concerned with the review of enrolments against of admissions targets.

2.15 The School has clear policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students, which adhere to the principles of fair admission and meet the requirements of the awarding body and awarding organisation. The processes support the School in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.16 The Teaching and Learning Handbook sets out the School's approach to learning and teaching, including planning for teaching and the development of innovative teaching practice, assessment methods and assessment setting. Responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning is devolved to programme teams. Programme specifications identify the learning and teaching strategies employed in each programme. Programme handbooks and the quality handbook provide further information to students and staff.

2.17 The School monitors the quality of teaching through a variety of mechanisms, including peer and management teaching observations and student feedback questionnaires. Programme Committees are responsible for reviewing and enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices at programme level. The Staff Development Policy sets out the principles and processes for the continuous professional development (CPD) of academic and non-academic staff. The School recently subscribed to the Higher Education Academy and supports academic staff to obtain Fellowships. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.18 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined policies and procedures related to learning and teaching, and information provided for staff and students, and held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.19 The Teaching and Learning Handbook is available to staff and students on the VLE. The School appoints appropriately qualified academic staff through a clearly defined process. Staff teaching on University provision are additionally approved by the University. The majority of staff have teaching qualifications and the School encourages staff without teaching qualifications to undertake appropriate training. Newly appointed members of teaching staff are well supported. They receive a comprehensive formal induction and are assigned a buddy. They also have an informal teaching observation shortly after joining to ensure teaching quality meets the School's requirements.

2.20 Student module evaluation questionnaires invite students to comment on the quality of teaching, and module monitoring and review reports for the HND programme consistently show broad student satisfaction. Students who met the review team also confirmed that they were satisfied with the quality of teaching and praised the quality of teaching staff.

2.21 The School reviews the quality of teaching through management and peer observation. Whereas management observations are graded and feed into staff appraisal, peer observation of teaching provides an opportunity to reflect on teaching practice and share good practice. The peer review process document states that summary reports from subject clusters are to be considered by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. This Committee is not part of the current governance framework and no reports are considered via School-level academic committees (see recommendation under Expectation A2.1). Programme Committees review the quality of teaching when considering programme evaluation and monitoring reports.

2.22 The School provides adequate support for the professional development of academic staff. The Staff Development Policy clearly states the expectations of the School for CPD and describes the process for applying for support. Academic staff who met the review team confirmed that the School supports them appropriately in their development and that they understand the process of how to go about securing support. The School's record of recently undertaken development activities demonstrates that all staff are actively engaged in professional updating and have attended a variety of internal and external development events. The School actively encourages staff who do not have teaching qualifications to obtain them, and provides financial support for those who want to obtain Higher Education Academy Fellowships. Staff teaching on University programmes also have access to the University's staff development programme, and bespoke sessions can be arranged upon request. Staff teaching on Pearson programmes attend relevant staff development events hosted by the awarding organisation. Staff appraisal is conducted for all staff on an annual basis. It provides opportunities for staff to reflect on their achievements, provide new ideas for supporting student learning, and identify their CPD training and development needs. Staff share good practice during 'lunch and learn' sessions and standardisation meetings, and have the opportunity to attend the University's annual Teaching and Learning Conference.

2.23 The arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning are appropriate and robustly executed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.24 The Student Support and Disability Policy, and the Equality and Diversity Policy, set out the School's approach to the support of students. Information on student support arrangements is available to students on the website, the VLE and in student and programme handbooks.

2.25 On commencement of their programme, all students receive an induction. Lecturing staff are the first port of call for students requiring academic support. All students also have a personal tutor, who monitors study progress and supports personal development planning. The Student Support Department offers a range of study, welfare and pastoral support, in addition to student funding and careers advice. There is also a dedicated Academic Support Centre that focuses on helping students who have fallen behind in their studies. It also provides personalised support for academic study, including for students with specific learning difficulties to develop their learning strategies. Group skills workshops are offered to all students on a walk-in basis. Skills development is also facilitated through the curriculum, for example through compulsory employability skills and research methods modules. The Learning Resources Centre offers help and advice on e-resources, reference books, digital literacy, search skills and the use of learning resources. The VLE provides a link to online computer skills development programmes.

2.26 The School monitors the adequacy of its student support arrangements and learning resources in a variety of ways, including module and programme review reports, and feedback from staff and students. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.27 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined student support policies and processes, personal development plans, and support workshop arrangements, and held meetings with academic and professional support staff, and students.

2.28 All students have an induction into each level of their higher education study. This was recently expanded and now consists of a two-week orientation programme that combines traditional induction into the School, student support arrangements and the programme of study with a series of interactive skills development activities, games and challenges relevant to the programme of study. These measures have been introduced in response to previously low retention rates and have had a positive impact on recent retention rates. Staff also reported a greater engagement of students with their learning once formal teaching started.

2.29 The School places great emphasis on the development of skills. Skills development is an integral part of the curriculum and includes compulsory modules such on employability skills and research methods. In addition, the Academic Support Centre provides a plethora of skills development workshops, open to all students, on study skills, communications skills, academic writing and referencing, research and problem solving, and CV writing and interview skills. These sessions are highly valued by students. There is also a comprehensive and useful study skill guidance document.

2.30 In analysing its progression and completion rates for its HND provision, the School identified the need for extra support for students who have fallen behind in their studies and

experience difficulties in meeting assessment requirements. It established an Academic Support Centre that provides personalised study support for such students. For each student, an individualised learning plan is developed, and the work of the Centre has resulted in an increased number or re-submissions of referred assignments and submission rate for outstanding assignments. The highly effective work of the Academic Support Centre, which enables HND students to complete their qualification in a timely manner, is **good practice**.

2.31 The School introduced personal development plans to support student learning and skills development. Based on their own experience, students are asked to evaluate their current skills and competencies against professional standards, identify development needs and the activities required to meet these standards, and create a personal development plan with objectives, success criteria and target dates for achievement. Although the plans examined by the review team demonstrate student engagement with the process, their impact was limited, and the School subsequently integrated a revised version into the regular learning process.

2.32 Academic staff also help students develop their skills within classroom learning sessions by adopting a student-centred delivery style that includes group discussions, presentations and mock interviews. Independent learning of students is encouraged via the student portal for Pearson programmes, and a combination of the School and London Metropolitan University VLE for University provision. These learning platforms host a range of academic resources, including interactive course material and discussion boards that support class-based learning and are available to students on and off campus. Students who met the review team confirmed that they make good use of the learning platforms.

2.33 Student pastoral support services includes provision for welfare and pastoral care, advice on student funding and finance, and assistance with issues such as academic appeals and complaints. Students with disabilities and special learning needs are adequately supported by the School. At the application stage, the Disability Support Officer interviews the prospective student to discuss their support requirements and the School will make reasonable adjustments where required (see Expectation B6). The School will also assist students that qualify with the application for Disabled Student Allowance. The Student Support Department keeps a register of all students who have declared a disability and shares this information with teaching and support staff on a need-to-know basis to ensure students can fully participate in the learning. The School does not provide in-house dyslexia support. However, students can access professional external support via their Disabled Student Allowance entitlement.

2.34 The careers and employability advice the School provides helps to prepare students for employment. Support is offered for CV and cover letter writing and interview techniques, and the School also hold workshops and seminars with participation of the Croydon Chamber of Commerce and other external industrial experts. The student support department provides an annual summary on the support and career development queries handled, which enables the School to monitor support needs and target resources. The wide range of personalised support, which enables a diverse body of students to reach their academic, personal and professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.35 The School monitors the effectiveness of its support services to some degree. Attendance of academic support staff at Programme Committee meetings provides insight into student requirements, and provides a seamless approach to address any issues. The School also encourages students to provide feedback to further improve support services. However, there is no provision for evaluating the effectiveness of student support services at an institutional level.



2.36 The School makes appropriate learning resources available to students. HND students have access to the School's library and IT resources on campus. Students on University programmes are taught at the location of a sister organisation and access resources predominantly at that campus. They also have access to University online library resources. Student feedback on the adequacy of resources is invited through questionnaires. Students from all programmes who met the review team were generally satisfied with the learning resources provided and confirmed that they broadly meet their needs.

2.37 The School provides comprehensive academic and pastoral support to students that are student-focused, ensuring that students are not disadvantaged by disability and are supported in their independent learning. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.38 The School has a Student Engagement Policy, which confirms that the views of students should inform quality assurance systems and acknowledges that student involvement in quality can have a positive influence on the delivery and development of the student experience. The School engages students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience at various levels. There is a Students' Union, with three elected officers and an established student representation system. Class representatives are members of Programme Committees and the Students' Union Committee, together with the Students' Union President. The Students' Union Committee is the principal body representing students' views and interests. It brings together student representatives and representatives from student support services. It receives and considers matters raised by student representatives and proposes actions. The Committee reports to the Academic Board, Executive Committee and the School Board.

2.39 There is a variety of mechanisms for capturing student feedback, including end-of-module surveys, annual student experience surveys, and informally via suggestions boxes. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.40 In considering this Expectation the review team examined the terms of reference and minutes of relevant committees, and student surveys. The team also met senior, academic and student support staff, and students from all programmes.

2.41 Although there are various mechanisms to capture the student voice, students' contribution to, and impact on, the most senior decision-making bodies within the School is limited. With regard to student representation the academic governance framework and actual practice do not fully align (see recommendation under Expectation A2.1). For example, the membership of the Academic Board does not include students, but student representatives have attended the most recent Academic Board meeting. However, they are not provided with briefings or papers in advance of the meeting and their role was limited to providing feedback.

2.42 The Students' Union Committee, chaired by a member of staff, meets regularly to discuss student feedback and how to improve the student community. This is in accordance with its terms of reference. The governance document describes the Students' Union Committee as feeding directly into the Executive Committee. However, there is no shared membership and there is no evidence of reports being sent from the Students' Union Committee to the Executive Board. The review team heard that student representatives can be invited to Executive Board meetings where this is considered appropriate, and that this had taken place once. There is student representation on the most recent Academic Board and in practice the Board is the primary conduit for student matters.

2.43 The School has run an annual student survey for the past two years. However, senior staff were unfamiliar with this feedback mechanism and the results had not been considered by any formal decision-making body, although the terms of reference of the Students' Union Committee assign responsibility for this to the Committee (see recommendation under Expectation A2.1) Although they had been discussed at a weekly staff meeting, staff could not inform the team of any actions that had taken place as a result. Student feedback is also captured in the module monitoring review reports and

subsequently feeds into the programme evaluation and monitoring process. In the MMRs seen by the review team the relevant sections of the report are often used to analyse students' performance statistics rather than to consider student feedback. The review team **recommends** that the School fully implement its policy to include student feedback in module monitoring review reports.

2.44 When discussing with students how they knew that their suggestions had been acted upon, the review team heard that students witnessed the changes themselves, for example different furniture in communal spaces, or better internet speed. Staff described 'You Said, We Did' posters as a communication tool used to inform students of actions taken in response to their feedback, and stated that student representatives are responsible for providing feedback on actions to other students.

2.45 The representative role is primarily used by students to voice concerns regarding their programmes; student representatives routinely attend Programme Committee meetings. Student representatives feel confident in speaking to staff where issues arise but not all were not given formal training for their role, although the student representative job description states that this would be provided by the student support team. Students who met the review team were satisfied with their opportunities to discuss concerns regarding their programmes or other experiences.

2.46 While mechanisms exist for students individually and collectively to provide feedback, there are limited opportunities for students to make contributions to strategic decision-making about their educational experience at School level. Students' role in all committees is limited to the provision of feedback to staff and the dissemination of actions taken. Students are also not involved in the development and approval of new programmes (see Expectation B1) and there is a need to further develop the role that students play in relation to the outcomes of quality assurance processes linking with School-level decision-making (see Enhancement). The review team **recommends** that the School further strengthen the effectiveness of its engagement with students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.47 The School is responsive to immediate student feedback and students feel that their voice is heard and acted upon. While the School provides sufficient opportunities for students to provide feedback, students are not fully engaged as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. There are also weaknesses in the systematic analysis of student feedback and a lack of overall institutional awareness of student feedback. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

**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**

2.48 The School undertakes assessment of student performance within the academic framework and regulations of its awarding partners. Its role in assessment is largely similar with respect to both awarding partners. The School is responsible for setting assessments, first and second-marking, and giving feedback to students on their work. Awarding partners maintain oversight of assessment; appoint external examiners, who moderate student work; and have processes in place to assure the integrity of decisions on the award of credit and qualifications.

2.49 The School has its own recently updated assessment regulations and procedures, which include guidance to staff teaching on the HND programme about scheduling, setting and marking assessments. There is a range of ancillary School policies relevant to assessment on internal verification, mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct, equality and diversity, student support and disability. The Student Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy and the Harvard Referencing Guide are also relevant. These are available to both staff and students on the intranet. Further guidance on assessment matters is provided to staff in handbooks. Students receive assessment information in student and programme handbooks.

2.50 The School holds standardisation meetings to ensure parity of approach and organises staff development activities related to assessment. Assessment boards are held at the School for the HND programme, and the Board and related committees are supported by the Registry and the exams office. For London Metropolitan University provision, assessment boards are the responsibility of the University. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.51 In order to test the effectiveness of the School's policies and procedures, the review team examined the academic agreements with the awarding partners, assessment policies and regulations, handbooks, guidance and development activities for staff and students, examples of assessment briefs and marking, regulations and guidance provided by awarding partners, awarding partner reports, terms of reference and minutes of relevant School committees, and the School's mapping of its practice against the Quality Code. The team also discussed assessment policies and practices with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.52 The School has mapped its assessment practices against the Quality Code, *Chapter B6*. The School has effective policies and procedures for setting assignments, marking, verification and providing feedback to students on its HND programmes, which meet the Pearson requirements. The Internal Verification Policy clearly details the processes to be followed. Assessments and marking guidelines are drafted by module leaders in consultation with colleagues. They are internally verified before being handed to students. Marking is also standardised and internally verified, and marks are externally moderated by a Pearson external examiner. Students are given both formative and summative feedback on their work. Students on the HND are well informed about assessment regulations, both for their degree and the assessment criteria for individual assignments. They were also clear

about when assignments had to be submitted and the consequences of missing deadlines. They stated that feedback was timely and helpful.

2.53 Formally constituted HND assessment boards are held each term. The constitution of these boards is clearly set out in the School's governance framework. While the framework states that the boards are chaired by the Head of Centre or Head of Assessment, in practice they are chaired by the Principal. The role of the boards is to make recommendations for progression and awards to Pearson. These are confirmed by the external examiner, who provides an annual report that includes suggestions for development and improvement. Reports seen by the review team were positive.

2.54 The provision validated by the University has not yet completed a full assessment cycle. A similar process for setting and marking assessments to that described above, with external input provided by the Academic Liaison Tutor and the University-appointed external examiner, is in place. Assessment boards will be held at the University under University regulations. Students studying on University programmes were well informed about assessment criteria and found the feedback that they had received to be timely and helpful.

2.55 The School has policies in place in relation to specific aspects of assessment, such as mitigating circumstances, reasonable adjustments, the recognition of prior learning, and academic misconduct, which are framed appropriately to align with the partner's frameworks and guidance. However, there are inconsistencies in the policies and processes in place and their operation. Staff that met the review team were unclear about the processes involved and were unable to clarify their operation (see recommendation under Expectation C).

2.56 The School has a written Mitigating Circumstances Policy, which applies to all students irrespective of the programme on which they are registered. The Policy is referred to in the generic student handbook and the programme handbook for the University top-up programme. The Policy is also available on the portal, and students who met the review team were well informed about how to submit a claim.

2.57 The Mitigating Circumstances Policy does not cover long-standing disabilities that last longer than a year. Students are warned that an application for mitigating circumstances with longer term implications may be referred to the assessment board, with a recommendation to withdraw from the programme. The Policy gives details of how and when claims for mitigating circumstances should be submitted, acceptable grounds for claims, and evidence that should be provided. Applications are made on a standard form. Late submission of forms may be possible in exceptional circumstances. However, different advice is given in the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and student handbooks regarding which procedures to use.

2.58 The School's assessment regulations provide for two separate mitigating circumstances procedures: one for short term extensions to assignments, and one for circumstances that have arisen near the time of submission, or which have longer term implications. It is unclear how School policies and procedures for mitigating circumstances and reasonable adjustment work effectively together for those with difficulties covering a longer period of time who are not registered as disabled.

2.59 Claims for mitigating circumstances are handled by the School's Mitigating Circumstances Panel. The Panel, chaired by the Head of Centre, has five members. It meets termly and reports to the assessment board. The decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel can be formally appealed by students.

2.60 The review team examined the Panel's meeting cycle and the minutes of its operation and was unable to reconcile the chairing and attendance at the meetings for which minutes were available with the governance structure. The team was also unable to verify

the independence of the Panel from the assessment board and the Appeals Panel. It was unclear how the decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel were formally reported to the assessment board.

2.61 In its mapping against Expectation B6, the School does not identify any policies or procedures related to inclusive design or individual reasonable adjustments. The review team noted that relevant policies and guidance are in place. The School has an Equality and Diversity Policy, which states that it is committed to supporting and enabling students with disabilities, impairments or learning difficulties to take part in all aspects of the College's academic programmes. The School's Student Support and Disability Policy requires students to declare disabilities at the application stage and commits the School to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate and promote successful learning.

2.62 The guidance provided to both staff and students on reasonable adjustment is incomplete and at times confusing. The School's revised assessment regulations and procedure contains a section on reasonable adjustment in examinations and qualifying circumstances are listed. Students are advised to contact student support services for assistance. Reasonable adjustment for other forms of assessment is not included. The review team was informed that the provision of reasonable adjustment for students on the HND programme was covered by the School's Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures. However, as discussed above, the Mitigating Circumstances Policy states that the School does not normally consider permanent or long-standing disabilities as mitigating circumstances.

2.63 Information for students and staff on reasonable adjustments is inadequate. Pearson's Centre Guide to Assessment level 4-7 indicates that provisions for reasonable adjustment should normally be set out in student handbooks. However, reasonable adjustment is not mentioned in the HND handbook. Equally, the School's general student handbook and programme handbooks for University-validated programmes do not discuss reasonable adjustment, but refer students to key policies and the role of support services. The School's quality handbook states that under discrimination law, the College may make reasonable adjustments to ensure equal treatment of students in assessment. It states that all tutors are aware of relevant policies and procedure but does not indicate where these are to be found. No guidance is provided in the draft handbook for staff teaching on the HND programme.

2.64 The School has policies and procedures for the recognition of prior learning, which closely follow advice provided by Pearson. The policy covers the accreditation of certified and non-certified, experiential and achievement-based learning. However, the policy is not readily available to staff and students. It is not amongst the regulations and procedures published by the School on its website and is also not referred to in the School's assessment regulations or explained in staff and student handbooks. The School indicated that the policy is not currently in use. The School uses a procedure called Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience when admitting students without traditional academic qualifications. This process is discussed in more detail under Expectation B2.

2.65 There is confusing information about the School's procedures for dealing with academic misconduct. The School has three policy documents that refer to academic misconduct: the Academic Misconduct Policy, the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, and the Harvard Referencing Guide. Students on University programmes, according to their handbooks, are subject to the University's policies and procedures concerning plagiarism and academic misconduct. However, the Academic Misconduct Policy implies that referral to the University is at the discretion of the programme leader. The School's course-level agreements with the University for its top-up and foundation programmes imply that a School procedure should be in place for academic misconduct, and detailed in the course handbook. The three policy documents that apply to HND

students contain different information about procedures and the penalties imposed if academic misconduct is found to have taken place.

2.66 All submitted coursework requires an attached declaration by the student stating that it is their own work; coursework is put through plagiarism-detection software. Levels of acceptable similarity are determined at the module level and inform marking. Where a suspected case is identified by a marker, and is confirmed by the internal verifier, the student is presented to the assessment board as referred. Further investigation of the case is triggered by the student making a formal appeal after the results of the assessment board are published. Students stated that they are well-informed through induction and their lectures about the nature of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

2.67 There are different versions of the processes for dealing with plagiarism in operation. Cases of alleged plagiarism are heard by a Plagiarism Panel. The composition and terms of reference of the Plagiarism Panel are set out in the School's governance document. The review team read sample minutes from the Plagiarism Panel but could not match the chairing and membership of the panel that were recorded with the formal governance structure. The team was informed that the Appeals Panel deals with allegations of academic misconduct other than plagiarism. However, the team was also informed that the assessment board would handle cases such as cheating in examinations. The team also received contradictory information about whether a student accused of plagiarism would be examined through a viva voce or whether an investigatory meeting would be held with the student, or students in the case of collusion, to which the student could bring a supporting person.

2.68 The process of appeal against the decision of the Plagiarism Panel is unclear. The School's Academic Misconduct Policy states that a student found guilty of plagiarism has a right of appeal to the assessment board, the decision of which is final, whereas the Student Code of Conduct states that the student has the right of appeal to a specially convened Appeals Panel, the decision of which is final.

2.69 In order to eliminate differing versions of the policies and procedures discussed above, and to align practice with the requirements of these policies, the review team **recommends** that the School review and implement appropriate changes to its policies, procedures and guidance in relation to mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct, reasonable adjustments and recognition of prior learning, to ensure coherence and equitable treatment of students.

2.70 The School, working with its awarding partners, has a range of policies and processes related to assessment and the recognition of prior learning, which are intended to enable students to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes and to underpin the award of credit and qualifications. The School operates effective policies and procedures for the setting and marking of student work, which demonstrate the extent to which students have achieved intended learning outcomes. However, in relation to aspects of assessment and recognition of prior learning, where the School is expected to have its own policies in place that complement the regulations and procedures of the partner, the School's policies and procedures lack clarity and coherence. The confusion identified has the potential to prejudice the equitable treatment of students with additional needs, mitigating circumstances or seeking opportunities to benefit from the recognition of prior learning, and the fairness of treatment of students accused of academic misconduct.

2.71 The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated risk level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Not met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.72 The School has limited responsibilities for external examining. Pearson and London Metropolitan University are responsible for defining the role, nominating, training and recognising the work of external examiners, whereas the School is primarily responsible for putting into effect the recommendations of external examiners and making effective use of their reports in quality assurance and enhancement. External examiner reports are reviewed by the programme team and considered by the Programme Committee, and, where necessary, actions are formulated in response to any recommendations made. The School's process for receiving, reviewing and responding to external examiner reports would ensure that scrupulous use is made of external examiners and allow the Expectation to be met.

2.73 In considering this Expectation the review team examined external examiner reports and relevant committee minutes, and met senior and academic staff and students to establish the use made of external examiners and their reports.

2.74 Staff have a clear understanding of the School's role and responsibilities with regard to external examining and were able to describe the processes employed. For all provision the programme leader is responsible for liaising with the external examiner. For the HND provision this includes providing the external examiner with relevant information regarding the programme, the assignment briefs and confirming the dates of visits. The latest Pearson external examiner report was largely positive, with no essential recommendations. The programme leader also drafts actions in response to any recommendations made. Programme Committee minutes demonstrate that summary outcomes of the external examining process are received, however, action planning is not evident from the minutes. Module and programme monitoring reports take appropriate account of external examiner comments. Students can access external examiners' reports via the School's VLE.

2.75 At the time of the review external examiner reports had only been received for Pearson programmes, as University provision was in its first year of operation. For University provision, the University will share the external examiner reports with the School and formally reply to any recommendations made, with input from School via the relevant programme leader. The University's quality manual specifies that module and programme leaders are also required to reflect on external examiner comments as part of the module and programme monitoring processes.

2.76 The School has adequate measures in place to ensure it makes effective use of external examiners and their reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

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

#### **Findings**

2.77 The School's policies and procedures for the annual monitoring of modules and programmes are set out in two policy documents, one on module monitoring and review, and one on programme evaluation and monitoring. These are published on the School's intranet, and are also available in the quality handbook and the draft academic staff handbook for the HND programme. Details of the processes for monitoring and review of London Metropolitan University provision are given in the University's quality manual.

2.78 The School produces module, programme and School-level reports in conjunction with its awarding partners. Different processes are involved in the monitoring and review of provision validated by different partners. Reports are compiled using standard templates and draw on a range of inputs, including student performance data, student feedback, staff reflection and external review. The process leads to the production of action plans.

2.79 The awarding partners have responsibility for periodic programme review and have relevant policies and processes in place. The School does not have a process for the periodic review of its provision. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.80 To test the effectiveness of the School's procedures, the review team examined relevant policy documents, handbooks and templates, monitoring reports and action plans, and relevant committee minutes. The team also reviewed the validation agreement with the University and the School's mapping of its practice against the Quality Code. Furthermore, the review team met staff responsible for, and involved in, annual monitoring and review.

2.81 Guidance provided to staff about the processes involved is not always clear. The draft handbook for staff teaching on the HND programme, and the School's published policies for module and programme monitoring, refer to oversight by committees that no longer exist.

2.82 For Pearson provision, the School produces comprehensive and useful termly MMRs. Reports comprise a reflection on student performance; student feedback; external examiner comments; operational matters; and learning, teaching and assessment. They also identify good practice and action plans. An instance was noted of discussion of MMRs by the Academic Board, however, this is not a regular agenda item.

2.83 The programme leader prepares an annual Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Report, drawing on, among other things, the MMRs. This is a wide-ranging analytical and reflective document covering student performance data, external examiner reports, student feedback, operational matters, and physical and human resources. The report also identifies good practice, enhancement plans and programme amendment proposals, and contains an action plan. The reporting template does not require formal sign off, but minutes of the Programme Committee state that last year's Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Report was presented to the Committee and discussed at some length. Staff, and to some extent students, are aware of the content of monitoring reports. There is student involvement in monitoring processes and student feedback forms one of the inputs to monitoring reports. However, the committees where students are represented, the Programme Committee and Academic Board, are briefed on and may discuss monitoring reports. They do not have a

formal oversight role in approving reports or tracking progress.

2.84 The School completes an annual online evaluative Annual Programme Monitoring Review report for Pearson. The report includes statistical information, and commentary on quality and standards, published information, learning and teaching, resources, staff development and employer engagement, and includes an action plan. Pearson also conducts an annual Academic Management Review of the School. The resulting reports have been positive.

2.85 University-validated provision began very recently and has not as yet completed an annual cycle. Therefore, no module or programme monitoring reports were available at the time of the review. Details of monitoring processes are set out in the University's quality manual and staff are aware of the University's requirements. The University Academic Liaison Tutor will oversee the production of the module and course logs by School academic staff.

2.86 Monitoring of actions and tracking of progress is weak. Monitoring reports contain action plans, but they are not systematically transferred to the Master Action Plan. Action plans in MMRs contain clear responsibilities and target dates but there is no evidence of tracking of progress and completion through the deliberative structures. The quality handbook assigns to the Programme Committee: responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of programme-related actions and escalation of broader issues, tracking progress on all actions as a standing item; updating the action plan; and ensuring effective communication on actions with the student body. However, Committee minutes do not demonstrate that it undertakes these roles systematically and effectively.

2.87 There is also a lack of formal mechanisms for the oversight of outcomes resulting from module and programme monitoring activities. The quality handbook states that monitoring outcomes and action points are considered at Programme Committees and presented for information to the Academic Board. While the 2014-15 Annual Programme Monitoring Report was considered, it is not clear from Committee minutes that subsequent annual monitoring reports have also been discussed. The Academic Board discussed the most recent MMR outcomes. However, the Board was not provided with any papers as a basis for debate. While minutes of the Executive Committee show that it was briefed on the 2015-16 Annual Programme Monitoring Review report for Pearson, it is not clear that the Committee routinely receives and discusses such reports.

2.88 The School completes annual monitoring reports diligently and effectively. However, oversight of these processes is often exercised informally. Key committees do not formally receive or approve monitoring reports and few instances of discussion of monitoring reports at committees were identified. Therefore, the School cannot satisfy itself that review processes are applied systematically and operated consistently. Weak oversight also prejudices the School's ability to use the outcomes of programme monitoring and review processes for enhancement purposes (see Enhancement). In order to address these shortcomings, the review team **recommends** that the School ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review processes.

2.89 There are adequate policies and processes in place for the monitoring of School programmes in order to maintain standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. There are weaknesses in the monitoring and tracking of progress against actions and in the oversight of programme monitoring processes and outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.90 The School has an Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure that outlines the School's approach to handling academic appeals, including grounds for appeals and timelines. It applies to students on all programmes. Academic appeals are heard by the Academic Appeals Panel. The School also has a Student Complaints Procedure, which details the various stages of complaints resolution and includes informal and formal stages. Formal complaints are investigated by the Registrar. Once internal processes are exhausted, students have the ability to escalate academic appeals and complaints to the awarding body or awarding organisation. Students also have recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Both policies are available to students on the VLE. Students are also made aware of their existence through the student handbook and programme handbooks for London Metropolitan University provision. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.91 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the School's policies and procedures for handling academic appeals and complaints, as well as minutes of Academic Appeals Panels. The team also met academic and professional support staff, and students.

2.92 Both the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure and the Student Complaints Procedure were recently revised and updated, and clearly state the scope of the Policy. However, while staff who met the review team were familiar with the School's processes for Pearson provision, they were unclear about the processes that would apply to students on University programmes. As information in student handbooks is limited, students were clear that they would rely on staff for advice regarding the complaints and appeals procedures; the advice and guidance provided by the student support team was instrumental in their understanding the complaint and appeal processes. The review team **recommends** that the School ensure staff are fully familiar with the complaints and appeals processes of the awarding body.

2.93 The governance document details the terms of reference, chair and membership of the Academic Appeals Panel. The latter is also specified in the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure. There are discrepancies in the documents as to who chairs the panel. Whereas the Policy states that Academic Appeals Panels are chaired by the Registrar, the governance document states that this would be done by the Head of Centre. In addition, the minutes of the Academic Appeals Panel show that the persons attending panel meetings are not always the ones listed in the membership of the Policy or the governance document. On occasion, the Chair of the Academic Appeals Panel has also been the same person chairing the Examination Board, thus raising concerns about independent decision making of the panel and fair treatment of students (see recommendation under Expectation A2.1).

2.94 The School has received a substantial number of complaints and appeals within the last three years. However, none of these have been escalated beyond the first formal stage of either procedure. The School explained that this was because students receive individual support from student support services, which enables them to understand the reason for the decision. Senior management receive updates of the number of appeals and complaints that are being considered. However, there is no accompanying analysis regarding the types of concerns that are arising, the remedies being put in place, or improvements to reduce the

numbers of complaints and appeals being received. This weakens the link between the outcomes of these processes and School-level decision-making and enhancement (see Enhancement). While senior staff can access individual student complaint and appeal files, there is no formalised process for institutional oversight of these cases. The review team **recommends** that the School formalise the process for the effective oversight of complaints and appeals.

2.95 The School has fair and accessible academic appeals and complaints policies and procedures in place. However, not all staff are fully familiar with the processes to be employed and there are weaknesses in the operation of the Academic Appeals Panel and the institutional level oversight of these process to enable enhancement. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

**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**

2.96 The School has recently commenced delivery of a Foundation Degree in Business, which includes a mandatory work placement in the second year of study. The School has appointed a dedicated Work Placement Coordinator to facilitate the sourcing of appropriate placements. In preparation, the School has developed a work placement student handbook and a template for work placement agreements with employers, which includes arrangements for the support of students during placements. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.97 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined programme documentation containing placement information for students, the work placement agreement template, and the work placement handbook. The review team also met academic and professional support staff with responsibility for placements.

2.98 At the time of the review, no work placements had commenced yet. Staff clearly understand the School's responsibility with regard to the provision of placement learning opportunities and were able to explain the processes that will be employed for the sourcing of placements, support of students during placements, and the assessment of placement learning. The draft work placement handbook, which will become operational in the academic year 2018-19, is comprehensive and provides relevant information for staff and students on a range of placement learning arrangements, including the responsibilities of staff and students.

2.99 Students are encouraged to find their own placement but will be supported by the Work Placement Coordinator in the process. The Work Placement Coordinator will vet all placements and ensure that they are suitable by carrying out due diligence procedures. Placement providers will be required to sign a work placement agreement prior to any placement activity taking place. The agreement template includes confirmation that the employer has carried out appropriate risk assessments and health and safety checks. Employers will provide an induction for students and a work plan will be agreed between the School, the employer and the placement student.

2.100 The Work Placement Coordinator, together with the employer, will monitor student attendance. School staff will carry out all assessments. There are no plans to involve employers; however, they will be asked to provide feedback on placement students in the form of a reference and appraisal. Students will be required to keep a log of placement activities detailing achievement of learning outcomes. Students will receive two visits from staff to provide support and monitor progress.

2.101 The School has appropriate mechanisms in place to source, manage and monitor future placement activities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**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**

2.102 The School does not provide research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

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

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

2.104 With one exception, all applicable Expectations in this judgement area are met and five are judged to be low risk. The risk level of the remaining five Expectations is judged to be moderate.

2.105 There are two features of good practice in this judgement area. These concern the effective academic support for HND students and a wide range of personalised support for a diverse student body. These are located under Expectation B4. There are eight recommendations in this judgement area. There are no affirmations.

2.106 The recommendations under Expectation B1 are concerned with the implementation of formal policies and processes for programme design and development and the involvement of external stakeholders and students in the process. The recommendations under Expectation B5 concern the effectiveness of the School's analysis of student feedback and the effectiveness of its engagement with students as partners in the assurance of their educational experience. Expectation B6 attracted a recommendation regarding the review and implementation of three of the School's ancillary assessment policies. The recommendation under Expectation B8 concerns the effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review. The two recommendations under Expectation B9 are concerned with the formalisation of institutional oversight of complaints and appeals, and the familiarisation of staff with awarding body procedures in these areas.

2.107 Although there are a number of recommendations in this judgement area, and some Expectations carry a moderate level of associated risk, all but one Expectations are met. The Expectation that is not met does not present a serious risk to the management of the quality of learning opportunities.

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

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

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

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

##### Findings

3.1 The School produces a range of information for different stakeholders in a variety of formats. Prospective students and external stakeholders are provided with information primarily through the School's website. Existing students use printed sources of information, including programme and student handbooks and the VLE. Staff are issued with an employee handbook and have access to School policies and procedures, the Teaching and Learning Handbook and the quality handbook via the VLE. The School has a Public Information Policy, which describes the ownership and responsibilities of different role holders for different types of information, including their approval. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined a range of information the School publishes, including the website, VLE, academic policies and procedures, and handbooks aimed at staff and students, and evaluated their accessibility, fitness for purpose and trustworthiness. The team also met senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

3.3 Programme information for prospective students on the School website is easily accessible and sufficiently detailed. It identifies the awarding body and includes course fees, entry requirements, a programme overview, learning outcomes, modules studied, and assessment methods used for two of the three programmes offered by the School. No information is available for the Foundation Degree in Business. The website also provides useful information to prospective students on the application process, fees and student finance, as well as a brief outline on learning and teaching, the student experience, learning resources and student support arrangements.

3.4 The VLE is a repository of information for students and staff and hosts a range of relevant information, including all School regulations and procedures; module feedback forms; programme handbooks; academic support arrangements, including referencing guides; lecture notes; assessment briefs; and formative feedback. Students who met the review team considered the information accessible and accurate, and confirmed that all required resources required are available on the VLE. Academic staff also confirmed that they can find key information relevant to their role on the VLE.

3.5 Academic policies published on the VLE are generally up to date and clearly state the version number, information owner, approval date and approving body, and next review date. However, the latest versions of some recently reviewed and updated policies had not been published yet on the VLE at the time of the review.

3.6 The very comprehensive student handbook provides important information on academic and non-academic matters, learning resources, student support, student representation and discipline. Programme handbooks are available for each programme and cover all relevant information, including programme specifications and assessment regulations.



3.7 The Public Information Policy is generally understood by staff, and staff were able to explain the processes for the creation and approval of different types of information. There are, however, some discrepancies between the Policy, the governance framework and what takes place in practice (see recommendation under Expectation A2.1) with regard to the responsibilities for information approval. For example, staff explained that in practice the Principal signs off programme handbooks. The Public Information Policy states that this is the responsibility of the Executive Committee, whereas the terms of reference of the Academic Board, as set out in the governance framework, assign responsibility for this to the Board.

3.8 The processes applied for the approval and amendment of published information do not always result in accurate and trustworthy information (see Expectation B6). For example, there are discrepancies between the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and student handbooks regarding which procedures apply. The guidance provided to both staff and students on reasonable adjustment is incomplete and confusing. There is a lack of information on this in student and staff handbooks and guidance documents. HND students are also advised to use the Mitigating Circumstances Policy for reasonable adjustment claims, although it states that the School does not normally consider permanent or long-standing disabilities as mitigating circumstances. There is confusing information about the School's procedures for dealing with academic misconduct, with different versions of the processes for dealing with plagiarism and policy documents that apply to HND students containing different information about procedures and the penalties imposed. There is contradictory information about the process of appeal against the academic misconduct decisions between the Academic Misconduct Policy and the Student Code of Conduct. The student handbook informs students that they need to access coursework submission sheets from two different sources. The review team **recommends** that the School ensure all published information is accurate and trustworthy.

3.9 The information the School publishes for students and staff is generally fit for purpose and accessible. There are weaknesses in the approval process for published information, which lacks rigour. As a result, some School policies and procedures lack clarity and coherence, and contain confusing or contradictory information for staff and students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

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

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

3.11 The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. There are no affirmations or good practice in this judgement area. The Expectation attracted one recommendation with regard to the accuracy and trustworthiness of published information.

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The School has responsibilities for taking deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities on all its programmes. To facilitate this, the School has developed a Strategic Plan. There is also a Teaching and Learning Handbook, which takes the place of a Teaching and Learning Strategy. The School provides a range of opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experience and for staff to engage in discussion and exchange of ideas to improve learning opportunities. Processes are in place for monitoring and review of programmes that include the identification of good practice and of opportunities for enhancing the student experience. An institutional wide action plan captures actions resulting from a variety of quality assurance processes. Overall, the School has structures and processes in place that are designed to promote the enhancement of student learning opportunities and would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 To assess the effectiveness of the School's approach to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities, the review team read strategic documents and action plans, monitoring reviews, documents related to peer review, handbooks and student feedback. The team also examined committee terms of reference and minutes, and held discussions with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

4.3 The School's mapping of its practice against the Quality Code with respect to enhancement has not been completed. The School's strategy for the improvement of student learning opportunities at institutional level is shaped by the School Board and developed by the Executive Committee, with input from the Principal and other stakeholders. The Strategic Plan does not explicitly link the improvement of the quality of students' learning opportunities to its aims and objectives, and the School does not have any sub-strategies to facilitate this. The Strategic Plan is written at a high level and the key drivers are student continuation and completion rates, which determine School key performance indicators. The strategy identifies four overarching aims of continuing to offer HNDs: develop pre and post-HND offerings; acquire new facilities; and develop provision in the health and social care sector. For the current year, the School has identified three key objectives of: developing and extending the curriculum; improving facilities; and best practice in governance and management. Beneath these objectives, there are broadly defined goals and activities with no specific timelines or plans at School or departmental level to ensure the implementation of the strategy. The strategic thinking articulated in the Strategic Plan is not part of a systematic, School-wide planning process that focuses on specific activities relating to students' learning opportunities. Specifying such activities and aims in a clear plan with timelines, milestones and targets would support the integration of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at School level. The review team **recommends** that the School strengthen School-level planning processes by developing clear targets and timelines for implementation of agreed objectives.

4.4 The School has a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the student experience. It describes its approach to enhancement as pervasive; done constantly through taking account of feedback. In its self-evaluation document the School cited a range of examples from recent years where the quality of learning opportunities had been improved, many of which were in response to the student voice. Students confirmed that they were

able to contribute ideas and suggestions for improvements, and that the School responded to their views and endeavoured to resolve issues. However, students are not fully involved as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their learning opportunities (see Expectation B5). While committee minutes illustrate the ability of students to bring issues for resolution and to comment on matters presented to them at Programme Committee and Academic Board meetings (see Expectation B5), there is no evidence of student involvement as partners in the development and discussion of strategy.

4.5 The School identifies good practice in module and programme reviews for the HND programme, and in course and programme logs for London Metropolitan University provision. The School also has mechanisms in place that encourage staff to share good practice through regular all staff and academic staff meetings. Furthermore, peer observation provides academic staff with the opportunity to observe and adopt good practice, and academic staff gave examples of this. For Pearson provision, standardisation meetings also provide opportunities for academic staff to see each other's work and exchange ideas.

4.6 Staff at all levels stated that the outcomes of monitoring and review are a key source to drive enhancements. There is, however, a lack of systematic formal consideration of programme monitoring outcomes at institutional level, which results in weak oversight of the monitoring and review processes (see Expectation B8). It also results in a weak link between monitoring and strategy. The School's presentation of its monitoring processes indicates that module-level action plans feed into a School-level quality document, and programme level action plans feed into the annual report that the School makes to Pearson, the Annual Programme Monitoring Review, which also contains an action plan. The School has a two-part master action plan, in which actions that have emerged from internal and external quality assurance processes are supposed to be captured, but there was no evidence that the action plans developed as part of module and programme monitoring are fully incorporated in the master action plan. The internal section of the action plan includes actions that have originated in some of the School's committees and internal staff meetings, and largely concern operational matters such as labelling broken cabinets or issuing attendance warnings. There is also no clear link between module and programme monitoring outcomes, the master action plan and the objectives in the Strategic Plan, thus impeding the School's ability to identify and implement targeted enhancements of its academic provision. The review team **recommends** that the School strengthen the link between the outcomes of quality assurance processes and School-level decision making.

4.7 The School has a student-centred ethos that supports continuous improvement of the student experience, and staff learning from good practice. However, the review team identified weaknesses in the School's approach to strategic planning, and in its use of the quality assurance procedures to identify and implement opportunities for enhancement. The School does not adopt a systematic and planned approach to enhancement at an institutional level. Strategic planning is weak. Weak institutional oversight of monitoring and review processes means that the School does not make systematic use of the outcomes of its quality assurance activities to inform strategy. These weaknesses in the structure and operation of the School's governance have the potential to impede enhancement activity and thus to impact the quality of students' learning opportunities. The School is currently not taking deliberate steps at institutional level in a systemic way to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.8 The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Not met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

4.10 The single Expectation in this judgement area is not met, with a moderate level of associated risk.

4.11 There are no findings of good practice or affirmations relating to this judgement area.

4.12 There are two recommendations in this judgement area with regard to the School-level planning processes and the strengthening of the link between the outcomes of quality assurance processes and institutional decision making. These point to weaknesses in the operation of governance arrangements, shortcomings in the rigour with which quality assurance processes are applied and an insufficient emphasis in the provider's planning processes to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The recommendations made under Expectations B5 and B8 also relate to this judgement area.

4.13 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

## Glossary

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

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Self-evaluation document**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

QAA2075 - R9744 - Feb 18

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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