



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of ForMission Ltd trading as ForMission College

October 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 ForMission Ltd trading as ForMission College. The review took place from 2 to 4 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Geoffrey Elliott
- Professor Kris Spelman Miller
- Mr Lyes Bouakaz (Student Reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

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

Key findings

Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice**:

- The strong relationship with placement providers which supports students in their personal and professional development (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

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

By January 2018:

- ensure that the admissions policy and the admissions complaints and appeals policy are published and accessible to prospective students (Expectations B2, C)
- ensure that programme information is consistent with the definitive records (Expectation C)
- implement the actions identified for the continuous improvement of Learning and Teaching and the student experience (Enhancement).

By July 2018:

- review and monitor resource arrangements to ensure consistent access to physical and digital learning resources across all campuses (Expectation B4).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- Steps taken to systematically monitor and report the implementation of the academic misconduct policy including the application of penalties (Expectation B6).

About the provider

ForMission College (the College) exists to provide training in church mission and leadership to students from a wide range of denominational and other backgrounds, with a particular focus on teaching that is innovative, practical and missionally relevant. Its roots lie in Springdale College, which was established in Birmingham in 1980, and in Together in Mission, which joined Springdale in 2009. In March 2015, Springdale College was renamed as ForMission College.

ForMission College has a total of eight campuses, located in London, Bath, Exeter, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool along with a dedicated residential centre in Burmington, Warwickshire. The undergraduate programme runs in seven campuses (not Bath) and the postgraduate programme in four of them.

The current validating partner is York St John University, although it has recently been agreed to end the arrangement by way of a variation of agreement, with no new students admitted after the 2017-18 intake. Discussions are currently well advanced with another validating partner.

The existing arrangement covers 10 separate awards, four at undergraduate level and six at postgraduate level. At the time of the review, the College had a total of 212 students, with three on the foundation degree programme, 143 on the BA (Hons) and 66 on the master's programme.

The Review for Specific Course Designation in November 2013 resulted in five features of good practice and five recommendations for action. The annual monitoring visits in 2015 and 2016 concluded that acceptable progress had been made, but noted that two of the recommendations had yet to be fully implemented and that further work was required regarding use of the Quality Code. The current review has reflected that ForMission has continued to seek to address the points made, and to build upon the identified areas of good practice, and has a new and robust action plan in place to monitor and direct this progress.

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 ForMission College is not a degree-awarding body, and its provision is currently validated by York St John University. That partnership is being terminated by way of a variation of agreement, and the final intake of students in September 2017 is due to graduate in summer 2020. The College is in discussion with a potential new validating partner. The current validation agreement outlines responsibilities of both the awarding body and the provider: that the College is not responsible for setting academic standards, but it is jointly responsible with the University for maintaining the standards set by the latter. The University is responsible for the approval of programmes to be offered by the College, and although ultimate responsibility for setting module-level learning outcomes resides with the University, responsibility for setting and marking assignments rests with the College. A revised Quality Assurance Handbook maps responsibilities of the College against the Quality Code.

1.2 The overall responsibilities of the University for monitoring alignment with external threshold standards, reference points and award titles, and the processes in place to confirm

the appropriate achievement of learning outcomes, including feedback from the external examiner, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team examined a range of documents relating to the maintenance of academic standards, including the Quality Assurance Handbook, programme specifications and module descriptors, and the College website. Meetings with senior staff and with the University's Collaborative Programme Representative explored how the College operates with the awarding body in ensuring that academic standards are maintained.

1.4 The College has limited delegated responsibility, with the University being responsible for setting standards through its approval of provision delivered by the College. The revalidation of the MA provision and evidence of approval of module amendments confirm the operation of the approval process by the awarding body. The mapping of programme and module learning outcomes to the national qualifications frameworks is reflected in the undergraduate programme specification, postgraduate programme specifications and module descriptors. Programmes are also aligned with the Subject Benchmark Statement and Master's Degree Characteristics Statement. Meetings with senior and academic staff confirmed awareness of the College's responsibilities in maintaining standards through the setting and marking of student work, and external examiners' reports comment on the appropriate achievement of learning outcomes. An annual monitoring report provides the awarding body with oversight of the provision.

1.5 There are currently 10 separate awards validated by the awarding body, although in practice these awards are subcomponents or pathways, respectively, of the single undergraduate and overarching postgraduate programme structure. Although the distinct named MA awards are not explicitly referred to on the course website, these titles accord with the programme specifications.

1.6 The responsibilities of the College and of the awarding body in ensuring that College provision is aligned with UK standards and appropriate levels allow the review team to conclude that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.7 The degree-awarding body sets the academic framework that regulates the qualifications awarded, including the qualifications that are delivered by the College. The framework comprises a set of qualification descriptors relating to the FHEQ levels as well as a credit framework for awards. The University also sets out the general regulations for its awards and the framework for the assessment of taught awards. As determined in the partnership agreement, the College's policies and procedures align with, and have been approved by, the awarding body. The College's Quality Assurance Handbook specifies the College's governance structures in relation to quality assurance, and identifies responsibilities of post-holders and committees in fulfilling its requirements.

1.8 The College has processes and governance structures to apply the University's academic regulations, and the programme specifications also reflect the requirements of these regulations. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.9 The review team examined documentation including the Quality Assurance Handbook and its revised version for 2017-18, the Academic Dean's report, external examiners' reports, the annual monitoring report for the University, and minutes of Academic Team Meetings and Subject Assessment Panels. The team also explored the operation of academic governance in meetings with the Principal, senior staff (including a member of Board of Trustees) and facilitators.

1.10 The report of the November 2016 annual monitoring visit indicates areas for improvement in relation to how the College maintains academic standards across its regional campuses, and notes that progress on reviewing chapters of the Quality Code was underway under the direction of the Academic Dean. The lack of a fit-for-purpose version of the Quality Assurance Handbook noted at that visit has been addressed, and the revised Quality Assurance Handbook now demonstrates alignment with sections of the Quality Code and clarifies College procedures, lines of accountability and responsibilities.

1.11 The College's senior leadership, in the form of the Executive Team, comprises the Principal, the Development Director, the Operations Director and the Academic Dean. They work with the College's Board of Trustees to ensure that the College operates under its articles of Constitution and Governance Procedures. While the post of Academic Dean is currently vacant, ultimate responsibility for academic quality and the academic delivery of the College's programmes is held by the Principal. Other responsibilities, including chairing the monthly Academic Team Meetings, the biannual Board of Studies and the triennial Subject Assessment Panels, are rotated between members of the Academic Team including the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme Directors. The College's committee structure determines the lines of responsibility from Boards of Studies through Academic Team Meetings, Senior Management Team, and Executive Team to the Board of Trustees. The Academic Board is a University committee which approves the marks recommended by the College's Subject Assessment Panel.

1.12 The internal reports by Programme Directors to Boards of Studies are a vehicle for reflecting on issues with programme delivery, including student feedback and student

attainment. In addition, an annual Enhancement report, presented to the Executive Team through the Senior Management Team, provides an analysis of student outcomes and progression data. Trustees are also updated through reports from the Academic Dean.

1.13 The College's policies and procedures, as outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook, are made available on the College's VLE, and the student handbooks provide links to the University's regulations. College policies on the VLE include academic misconduct policy, extension policy, student attendance and lateness policy, and student complaints policy. Subject pre-assessment panels have also been introduced to ensure integrity of marks, and there has been a review of the quality of the marker feedback.

1.14 The Subject Assessment Panels, attended by the awarding body representative, reflect the College's implementation of policies on academic misconduct, extensions and integrity of marks. The process for marking at subject level and the operation of assessment panels allows the College to gain oversight of standards across the campuses.

1.15 The monthly Academic Team meetings refer to policy updates, and staff whom the review team met confirmed communication of policies to staff. The programme handbooks refer to the awarding body's regulations with respect to assessment, and to policies concerning extensions, submission, and academic misconduct.

1.16 The College has relevant academic frameworks and regulations in place that govern how students are awarded credit and qualifications, and an appropriate governance structure to oversee standards and quality assurance. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

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

Findings

1.17 The responsibility for approving and holding a definitive record of each of the College's higher education programmes lies with the awarding body. The definitive record includes the programme specifications and module descriptors. The awarding body is also ultimately responsible for reviewing and modifying these documents. The awarding body makes these documents available to the College to use as a reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme. These processes allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.18 To evaluate the College's approach, the team reviewed the definitive records and associated processes, and held a number of meetings with staff from the College and the awarding body.

1.19 Although the awarding body holds the definitive record of each programme, the College keeps its own copy of the record. The awarding body does offer a direct link to the definitive records via its website, which could be directly inserted into the College's website and VLE. When making amendments to the records, the College follows the awarding body's processes, which includes providing details of changes to the awarding body.

1.20 Programme specifications seen by the review team incorporate detailed information including specific features of the programme, admission criteria, programme structure, teaching, learning and assessment, context and placements. Meetings with staff and students confirmed that they understand the information contained within programme specifications and module documentation. The meeting with the Senior Team also confirmed that the College uses these definitive documents as a reference point for teaching and delivery of programmes.

1.21 The College fulfils its obligations with regard to the definitive records of individual programmes and qualifications, and thus the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.22 The College does not have degree awarding powers, and delivers its higher education provision through the University. All provision is subject to the awarding body's policies, processes and procedures for the proposal, design and approval of modules and programmes of study. The awarding body is responsible within its regulatory and academic frameworks for confirming that programmes are validated and approved in line with relevant subject benchmarks; these include Programme Specifications, Master's Degree Characteristics Statements, Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

1.23 On the basis of these arrangements the College would meet the Expectation.

1.24 The review team discussed these processes in meetings with staff, students and the University representative, and examined relevant documentation relating to programme approval processes.

1.25 The review team examined evidence that the College follows a published programme approval process and evidence was provided of the process and practice of approval at module and master's level. The College's programme approval process documentation makes clear the College's approach to proposing programmes of study and engaging with the awarding body in the design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications.

1.26 College staff and the awarding body provide evidence that the former work closely with the awarding body to produce documentation in line with the academic frameworks, standards and benchmarks of the awarding body. Externality was present in the process of approval of programmes with reference to the FHEQ and relevant benchmark standards. The ultimate responsibility for setting module and programme-level standards resides with the awarding body.

1.27 The review team evaluated the procedures and practices in regard to the design and approval of taught courses to ensure that academic standards are set at the right academic level and meet threshold standards. The team scrutinised the awarding body's and College's academic policies and procedures, external examiner reports, and the process of engagement by staff with awarding body academic frameworks for validation and periodic review. The review team found evidence of understanding among College staff of the awarding body's processes for module and programme approval and the importance, and use, of learning outcomes and the FHEQ in programme design and assessment setting.

1.28 The College ensures that programme learning outcomes are aligned to module learning outcomes and have gone through a matching exercise with related documentation. There is evidence of College staff being involved in the authoring of validation documentation and being tested at validation by the awarding body, and also evidence of student input in module amendment. The process of module and course design and approval includes regard to learning outcomes, subject benchmarks and master's degree expectations, and these processes are clearly understood by staff. They are used effectively

in the design of modules and programmes at appropriate levels of the FHEQ, and other external benchmarks. This aligns with the awarding body's expectations and published module and programme approval documentation, regulations and policies.

1.29 The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding body, ensures that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and which are in accordance with the awarding body and College's own frameworks and regulations. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met, and that the associated 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

1.30 The College's programmes of study and module assessments are moderated and approved by the awarding body. The process of awarding credit and qualifications begins with the awarding body's approval of assessments and the application of policies and procedures for the awarding of credit and qualifications. These processes are set out in the awarding body's policies and regulations for assessment and the Conduct of Assessment Panels and Board of Examiners documentation. As part of the institutional agreement the awarding body requires the College to establish Subject Assessment Panels (SAPs) that sit three times per year. The Panels approve the format, content and marking schemes of assessment; agree final moderated marks; assure quality of assessment procedures; consider programme marks; and make recommendations to the Board of Examiners. These processes allow the Expectation to be met.

1.31 The review team examined evidence to test the Expectation, including key documents relating to the award of credit and qualifications, and gathered information from meetings with Senior Teams, staff, students and the University representative.

1.32 The College's teaching staff have responsibility for the design of assessments, and ensuring that learning outcomes are set at the relevant academic level. This reflects the awarding body's academic frameworks and processes of moderation and approval of assessment and marking, with final approval residing with the awarding body. The College has undertaken extensive work in matching programme and module-level learning outcomes in assessment. The review team also confirmed that evidence of the marking and assessment are presented to, and approved by, Subject Assessment Panels. This includes consideration of the format, content and marking schemes of assessment, and further evidence of feedback from external examiners. The Board of Examiners is the final body recognising the award of credit and qualifications set out under the awarding body's policies and procedures, with the College invited to attend.

1.33 The College recognises the importance of defining and assessing learning outcomes, and these are defined in assessment handbooks and approved by the awarding body. There is appropriate evidence of a clear understanding among College staff of the awarding body's processes for module definition and assessment setting. There is also evidence of marker and assessor training to use learning outcomes appropriately in module design and the setting of assessments at the relevant and appropriate level. Staff are involved in extensive assessor and marking workshops and related academic training activities. External examiners, on behalf of the awarding body, confirm in their reports that the threshold standards are appropriate and set at the correct level.

1.34 The review team evaluated the processes, procedures and practices for the definition and setting of threshold standards within assessment, module and programme design, and the definition of learning outcomes. There was robust evidence of clear

understanding among College staff of the importance and use of learning outcomes in assessment setting and module design to inform students of progress and performance.

1.35 There was also evidence of the effective use of learning outcomes in assessment by markers and assessors, with examples of consistent marking across campuses by the use of single markers and second markers. Processes and practices are in place, supported by appropriate policies and regulations, to ensure that assessments are set at the appropriate level to be effective in enabling students to meet the intended learning outcomes for their courses.

1.36 The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding body, applies external threshold standards and that credit, and qualifications, are only awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.37 The College works within the awarding body's policies, processes and expectations with regard to annual monitoring and periodic review. The awarding body undertakes annual monitoring of the College at both institutional and programme levels. The process and practice of annual monitoring and review, and action planning, are outlined in documentation and published in the recently updated Quality Assurance Handbook. The process of annual and periodic monitoring was updated in 2016 with the issue by the awarding body of a new template and guidance documentation.

1.38 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and students, and through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to monitoring and review of programmes.

1.40 The University annually monitors and reviews the processes and practices of assessment, and the standards of its awards, with the College responding by generating its own plan of action for any improvement. There was effective evidence of action planning in the annual monitoring process, which explicitly made use of data and external examiner reports. There was also evidence of the annual monitoring report reflecting upon student performance and external examiner commentary. The College is required by the awarding body to respond specifically to the external examiner reports along with other issues raised in the year from delivery of the programmes which results in an annual action plan for the College. The review team evaluated the processes and practices with regard to annual monitoring, periodic review, and quality assurance action planning and found that they were effectively monitored by the College, at strategic and operational level, and by the awarding body.

1.41 There was appropriate evidence that the annual monitoring process confirms, through external examiner reports, that standards are being met and that assessment was both appropriate, and conducted within published policies and practices. College staff understand the awarding body processes and procedures for annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes, and there is evidence of staff involvement in the production of the annual monitoring report. The review team evaluated the use made of the annual monitoring report and action planning and found evidence of the involvement of staff in the processes for quality assurance monitoring. Annual monitoring effectively ensures that academic standards are being achieved and maintained, and the College actively seeks improvements and enhancements within its annual monitoring and action planning procedure and practice.

1.42 The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding body, ensures that its processes for monitoring and review of programmes explicitly address both UK threshold and awarding body academic standards. Therefore, the Expectation is met, and the associated 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

1.43 The key uses of external expertise identified by the College are through the role of external examiners, who comment on the maintenance of standards for the award of credit and qualifications through biannual reports. The responsibility for engaging external expertise to advise on the setting and maintenance of academic standards resides with the awarding body. The University also requires external input in the approval of new programmes and in any amendment to existing programmes and modules.

1.44 The College also draws on external expertise through placement arrangements, which for the undergraduate awards forms an integral part of the programme, as reflected in the programme learning outcomes. Placement supervisors, who are not College staff, have an oversight, supervision and mentorship role for students during their placement hours, and report back to the College via supervisor reports and a supervision log. The responsibilities of placement supervisors, students and College are stated in the placement contract and set out in the placement handbook. Although the placement supervisors do not have a role in assessment, their contribution to the learning experience is significant.

1.45 The arrangements in place for external input allow the Expectation to be met.

1.46 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and students, as well as placement providers and supervisors, who are not staff of the College, and through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to externality.

1.47 One external examiner covers both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. External examiner responsibilities in assuring maintenance of standards are evidenced through external examiner reports twice yearly. The engagement with the external examiner in advance of the Board of Examiners is through Moodle. The awarding body arrangements for external examining are set out in a document that includes detail concerning responsibilities and powers. Appointment of the external examiners is by the awarding body.

1.48 Details of the external examiner are given in the student handbooks, and the annual reports are available to students on the VLE. Latest external examiner reports indicate improvement in academic provision; evidence from the June 2017 Board is that the pass rate increased from 65 per cent in February 2017 to 75 per cent in June 2017.

1.49 External examiners also contribute to programme and module amendment. The awarding body policy entails a differentiated approach to involvement of the external examiner, ranging from being informed of a change, to requiring endorsement. The University requires input from external subject experts in programme approval and there is evidence of the involvement of external expertise in the design of potential new provision.

1.50 Although placement supervisors do not directly contribute to the assessment of student learning, and no grading is done on-site in the placement, the student submission raised a concern that the placement supervisors did not understand the 'essence of the course'. However, the meeting with placement providers and supervisors confirmed that information from the College was made available through the Cluster Handbook and informal communication, and discussions are ongoing surrounding the creation of a forum in this regard.

1.51 Overall, the College makes use of independent external expertise in fulfilling the requirements of the awarding body in relation to assessment processes and the award of credit. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.53 All seven Expectations in the judgement area are met, and all have a low level of risk. There are no recommendations made in relation to these Expectations. There are no features of good practice, and no affirmations that relate to these Expectations.

1.54 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **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 courses within the College are subject to the awarding body's approval and validation policies, processes and procedures. The awarding body is responsible for confirming that the programmes are designed and validated in line with Subject Benchmark Statements, the FHEQ and the Master's Degree Characteristics Statement. The College has recently undertaken a Quality Code mapping exercise, the better to align its internal quality systems and processes to QAA expectations, and recently updated its Quality Assurance Handbook.

2.2 Oversight of programme design and approval resides with the Academic Dean, and as this post is currently vacant, with the Principal of the College. The roles and responsibilities of other staff in proposing and designing programmes of study are laid out in the Quality Assurance Handbook, with ultimate responsibility for validation and approval of programmes of study residing with the University as the awarding body. The College has arrangements with its awarding body regarding the design, development and approval of programmes.

The Academic Dean's report to the Board of Trustees addresses issues of compliance with awarding body policies and regulations for assuring quality and standards, and this oversight has been augmented in 2016-2017 with a Senior Management Team which reports to the Board of Trustees.

2.3 The above processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team evaluated and tested the effectiveness of the managerial and operational approaches to course proposal, design, development and approval by discussion with key staff and students, and through scrutiny of related documentation.

2.5 There was robust evidence that the College has recently introduced an internal Academic Subject Board that meets annually to review programmes of study in the light of module feedback data, to make recommendations for module or programme amendments to the awarding body. The criteria for module and programme proposals and amendments are specified by the awarding body in their policies and procedures documentation. There was evidence in meetings and in relevant documentation of the College staff's awareness of the processes and procedures required by the awarding body for the design, development and approval of programmes of study. The College follows the policies and practices of the awarding body to make recommendations in respect of module and programme proposals and amendments.

2.6 There was also evidence of effective evaluation of processes around programme design and amendment as part of the cycle of annual monitoring and review, particularly at Board of Studies. These policies and procedures were understood, and expertise and advice from the awarding body, the external examiners, and other external experts was used to design or amend modules and programmes and review the effectiveness of programmes of study.

2.7 The review team confirmed that the awarding body's policies and regulations require involvement of students in recommendation of amendments to modules and courses. While the sample of student representatives seen by the reviewers had not been directly involved in new course proposals or amendments, there was documentary evidence of a module amendment being discussed with other student representatives, and of proposals being altered in the light of student feedback on proposed module changes.

2.8 The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation by applying the awarding body's policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes, and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9 The College has a Student Recruitment and Admission Policy which outlines its approach to the recruitment, selection and admission of students. All prospective students apply through an online form on the College's website, and are then interviewed at their chosen campus. Where not all entry requirements have been met, applicants may be asked to complete an Initial Student Evaluation test or an online language assessment.

2.10 There is an Admission Complaints and Appeals Policy which explains the grounds for an appeal or complaint related to admissions and details the processes that will be used to address it.

2.11 The admissions process is managed centrally from Head Office and is supported by the Admissions Officer, although staff at local campuses retain responsibility for maintaining contact with applicants throughout the process.

2.12 The College's processes and approach to recruitment, selection and admission allow the Expectation to be met.

2.13 The review team conducted an analysis of documentation, which included policies and processes as well as meeting and Board minutes, and met with a range of staff and students from the College to assess the effectiveness of the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission.

2.14 Through its admissions process, the College emphasises the importance of building relationships between campus staff and applicants, and much of the communication during the process is verbal. Students met by the review team were satisfied with their experiences of applying to the College, and stated that the process had been discussed with them verbally throughout their applications.

2.15 The College's Student Recruitment and Admission Policy is an internal document and is not currently made available to potential students or applicants. Given that one of the two grounds for an admissions-related appeal or complaint is procedural irregularity, applicants are unlikely to be aware of whether procedures have been correctly followed without access to the policy. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College ensures that the admissions policy and the Admission Complaints and Appeals Policy are published and accessible to prospective students.

2.16 The College takes appropriate steps to ensure consistency between campuses. Interviews are conducted by senior members of campus staff and a standard academic interview form is used across all campuses. Application forms and interview forms are compiled and passed to the College's Admissions Board for a final decision, and this process involves the relevant Programme Directors.

2.17 As part of its widening participation agenda, the College admits a high proportion of students without level 3 qualifications, and ensures that all applicants are interviewed

regardless of their academic qualifications to assess their suitability for study on the programmes.

2.18 However, the College has also identified retention and progression as key priority areas for development, so where students do not meet the minimum academic entry criteria, they may be admitted on successful completion of an Initial Student Evaluation test. Some students met by the review team had undertaken the Initial Student Evaluation, and were clear about its purpose and the reasons they had been asked to complete it.

2.19 The College policy states that this Initial Evaluation may lead to a conditional offer, requiring the applicant to attend for six weeks and pass a formative assignment before formal enrolment as a student. However, it is understood that the conditional offer procedure, though still present in the policy, has not been and is not being used by the College. Instead, the Initial Student Evaluation has been updated, and is now taken under examination conditions by applicants who do not meet the entry criteria.

2.20 Overall, the College's policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students meet the Expectation. However, shortcomings in relation to the lack of external publication of the admissions policy, and the potential for procedural inconsistencies to go unchallenged, collectively lead to a moderate level of risk.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.21 The College articulates its approach to learning, teaching and assessment in a policy document which is also incorporated in the facilitator handbook and disseminated at the facilitator training day. Underpinning the approach and informing the learning and teaching activities are the five pillars or formation outcomes: personal formation, ministry formation, missional formation, spiritual formation and intellectual formation. The College delivers its undergraduate programmes across seven campuses, while the postgraduate programme is delivered in four locations. Undergraduate provision is delivered intensively at the Birmingham campus.

2.22 The College's teaching model is largely based on providing written study guides to its students, then holding contact sessions to facilitate their understanding of their contents. Teaching content is delivered by 'facilitators', deliberately named to reflect the interactive and exploration-based nature of the teaching sessions. Others contribute to the student learning experience, including Campus Leaders, who oversee student placements and the learning environment including the provision of pastoral support, and Campus Tutors, who lead weekly clusters and offer pastoral and academic support, and may undertake marking. Local placement supervisors, who are not College staff, have designated responsibilities for supervising and mentoring students. The vocational and placement aspects of the programmes are held in high regard according to the student submission.

2.23 Processes for staff development, including through training days and peer review, and resources for facilitators, provide opportunities to reflect on professional practice. Student feedback through module feedback forms contributes to the continuous enhancement of learning and teaching.

2.24 The principled approach to learning and teaching, and the processes in place to review and improve learning opportunities and teaching practices, enable the Expectation to be met.

2.25 To consider the College's approach to managing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, the review team examined a range of documentation, including the College's teaching and learning policy documents, and met senior staff, teaching and professional support staff, students, and placement supervisors.

2.26 The College encourages a shared approach to learning and teaching through its facilitator training and development opportunities, which enable facilitators to be updated on policy and process and to engage in pedagogic discussion. Reflection on practice is also enabled through facilitator feedback completed at the same time as students' evaluation of their module. A policy for peer review of teaching is in place, and both College and contracted staff confirmed its operation. A variety of materials to support facilitators is available on the VLE, and assessment marker training supports consistency of practice.

2.27 Staff are encouraged to undertake personal development opportunities, although the College does not have a dedicated fund for staff development. Personal development

includes gaining fellowship of the HEA, and in one case working towards a doctorate. Staff, students and alumni also have the opportunity to contribute to the Journal of Missional Practice. The staff handbook outlines expectations for staff, including undertaking the annual appraisal process, which includes consideration of training and development needs. Staff confirmed that the appraisal process is in operation, as is the process for peer review through the observation teaching sessions. Staff appointments are approved by the University and induction takes place largely at campus level, although on occasions there is some involvement from the central office.

2.28 The development of learning and teaching is enabled through a system of continuous improvement, including from student feedback via evaluation forms completed at the end of each module and more informal feedback. Students whom the review team met confirmed the College's responsiveness to their feedback, although they did not always know what actions had resulted. A summary of student evaluation scores is compiled identifying module and location. Opportunities to share good practice, beyond the facilitators' training day, are largely informal. In addition to module evaluation, students feed back through representatives who raise issues at meetings once per semester with the Campus Tutor. Student feedback is taken at Boards of Studies meetings, and although there is student representation at the Board of Studies, students do not attend the monthly Academic Team Meetings. This year, students participated in the National Student Survey (NSS) for the first time. The quality of teaching and learning opportunities scored well above sector average, although the learning resources (library, IT and specialist equipment) score was lower.

2.29 From the Enhancement Report, which presents student attainment data, a number of improvement actions have been identified, including the use of formative assessments, more tutorial support and facilitator training to address the progression of less able students.

2.30 Students' responsibilities are detailed in the student handbooks, and an induction quiz must be submitted to demonstrate understanding of these. A mid-semester tutorial allows students to reflect on their progress, which again must be submitted. The College uses a spreadsheet to track students' progress on assignments, enabling them to be followed up where necessary.

2.31 In addition to student handbooks at undergraduate and postgraduate level and a placement handbook, an appropriate range of policies and guidance are in place to support student learning, available on the VLE. These policies cover student attendance and lateness, academic misconduct, student disciplinary procedure, student complaints policy and procedure, appeals procedure, fitness to study policy, and extension requests. Students whom the review team met felt that they would know where to get advice on processes and policies when needed. A Student Services Administrator was appointed in September 2016 with specific responsibility for dealing with student enquiries.

2.32 The team noted that the College has processes in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and to act on areas for improvement. Students confirmed satisfaction with the teaching methods provided. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

2.33 Delivery of the undergraduate provision takes place across seven campuses; the MA is delivered at four locations, and an intensive programme is also offered at one campus. The College recognises the need to address the diversity of its student body and its responsibility to provide support for students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through an inclusive approach to learning, teaching and assessment. The vocational and missional orientation of the provision is reflected in the student learning experiences, including placement opportunities embedded in the undergraduate programme.

2.34 The College specifies the roles and responsibilities of relevant staff for the support of student development. These include the Academic Standards Manager (formerly Learning Support Manager), responsible for learning support and the quality enhancement of study skills, Campus Leaders, responsible for overseeing student placements and ensuring that pastoral care is provided, and Campus Tutors, who among other activities provide academic and pastoral support to students through tutorials.

2.35 The College has identified concern with poor student attainment, retention and progression, particularly on the undergraduate programme, and actions to address issues related to progression of students across programmes and campuses are identified in the Enhancement Report. Systems are in place for students to discuss their progress and to seek support, for example through mid-semester tutorials and contact with programme and campus staff. A Personal Development Profile is designed to encourage students to chart their development in the context of their missional practice, and documents progress through tasks and tutorial meetings. They complete a reflective journal, a portfolio and a personal growth analysis.

2.36 The student handbooks outline resources and policies relevant to student learning. An Equal Opportunities Policy is in place and is overseen by the Board of Trustees. Equality and diversity is present in a range of College policies. Resources are made available for students with potential, or undiagnosed, learning difficulties, including dyslexia, to support students in deciding whether to seek a diagnosis.

2.37 The College's policies and processes, including the tutorial and support systems, allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38 The review team scrutinised a range of documentation and met with College staff, including academic and professional support staff, and students from different campuses to test the College's approach.

2.39 The College has initiated a number of actions in response to concerns about student achievement, including having 'reviewed and overhauled the tutorial processes at all campuses, increasing the amount of tutorial support provided to students and formalised the manner in which one to one tutorials operate'. In addition, the Academic Standards Manager was appointed in September 2016 with specific responsibility for educational support. Due to the small campus sizes, the Campus Tutors know their students individually and can use this to advise students about their progress and development.

2.40 As indicated in the Enhancement Report, in the most recent intake in September 2016, 60 per cent of undergraduate students had no level 3 qualifications at all. The College has recognised the challenges of supporting students from such diverse educational

backgrounds, and has responded with a number of actions, including expanding the use of formative assignments and increasing the amount of tutorial support, and formalising the way in which tutorials take place. The College has introduced a means of monitoring student progress through a student tracker system in order to address concerns about retention and completion rates. Evidence from the June 2017 Boards, as noted in the latest external examiner reports, is that the pass rate has recently increased.

2.41 The College has in place relevant policies including academic misconduct, fitness to study, and guidelines for students with learning difficulties to support student development and achievement. A dyslexia specialist was invited to a facilitator training day to raise awareness among staff.

2.42 Personal development, which forms an integral part of the assessment of students in all years, focuses on formation outcomes. Placements and cluster activity form a significant part of the College's undergraduate programmes, and this is made clear in the programme specifications. Placements prepare students well for the types of missionary and community work they will be involved in after leaving College and are held in high regard by students. The Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education outcomes reported for 2014-15 indicate 58.3 per cent in full time work, and 4.2 per cent in work and further study.

2.43 An area of particular focus has been plagiarism and the study skills needed to address this. The academic misconduct policy indicates responsibilities, processes and outcomes, including penalties to be imposed. The College monitors plagiarism cases through its assessment procedures and is required to report on this to the awarding body. Most recently the College has noted an improvement in pass rates and a reduction in the number of plagiarism cases. Materials are available to support students and staff, and students whom the review panel met recognised the importance of appropriate practice.

2.44 The student submission pointed to the need for more tutorial support, and although students whom the review team met confirmed they were in general satisfied, concern was expressed about a campus where resources were particularly stretched and where there was a lack of sufficient support. Induction through a national event and local campus tours were felt to be useful, although those starting in January did not have a national induction.

2.45 The Student submission and meetings with students also identified difficulties with the provision of online academic library resources. It also refers to 'students struggling to fully utilise online provision of academic libraries and grading platforms', some negative feedback concerning online library resources, issues with 'the availability of books in some campuses, and support for students with low IT skills'.

2.46 Student feedback from various campuses provides an opportunity to comment on facilities, and the Campus Leaders meet to consider operations on the different campuses. Concern about the adequacy of learning resources is reflected in lower than average NSS scores for learning resources. Students also raised concerns about the suitability of space and resources on a number of campuses. Therefore, the review team **recommends** the College to review and monitor resource arrangements to ensure consistent access to physical and digital learning resources across all campuses.

2.47 The College's library strategy acknowledges the challenges of resourcing a set of small localised campuses and seeks to address them through the provision of training material to support access and the use of e-resources. Overall, the review team is satisfied that the College does have a range of supportive mechanisms and resources to support students' learning, development and achievement, and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.48 The College makes use of formal structures and informal methods for engaging students as partners in the assurance and improvement of their educational experience. The formal structures include a system of elected and trained student representatives, with representation on the Board of Studies. The College has also recently created the role of Student President.

2.49 Students work closely with campus staff and usually provide feedback informally to facilitators and Campus Leaders. The College also uses module evaluation forms as a formal mechanism for collecting feedback from students, and now participates in both the NSS and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey.

2.50 The College's approach to student engagement allows the Expectation to be met.

2.51 The review team met with students and staff at the College and reviewed policies and documentation, including the student submission, to assess the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement.

2.52 The Undergraduate Handbook contains information on how students can provide feedback, and details the College's formal system of student representation. The information was missing from the Postgraduate Handbook; however, the College confirmed that this is being addressed in the new version of the handbook.

2.53 One student representative is elected from each year group at each campus by their peers, although this is now to be increased to two per campus, and the College recently developed formal training for newly elected representatives in response to feedback from its annual monitoring visit. Limits on how many student representatives from each campus can attend the Board of Studies have been lifted in an effort to improve campus representation, although ensuring representation from all campuses continues to be a work in progress, reflected in the preparation of the student submission.

2.54 The College communicates with student representatives by email in between meetings or when representatives cannot attend meetings. Responses to feedback, including changes made, are emailed to students and representatives, ensuring that the feedback loop is closed. As part of the training, representatives are reminded of the importance of passing feedback on to the wider student body. An election for the Student President is held annually, where personal details including name and campus are removed from manifestos. The Student President attends Trustee Board meetings to represent the student voice on decisions affecting students.

2.55 Students met by the review team demonstrated awareness of the process for election of student representatives, and representatives were aware of the training. The students felt consulted through their representatives and the Student President.

2.56 Module evaluation forms are completed by students, and the results from these are summarised and sent to the relevant Programme Director and to the Academic Dean. The Programme Director uses these results when preparing their Annual Report to the Academic Subject Board. Feedback from module evaluation forms is discussed at the Board of Studies in the presence of student representatives.

2.57 The College places a heavy emphasis on the informal interactions between students and staff at campus level, facilitated by the small campus sizes. This view is shared by students, who will often discuss issues with, or provide feedback to, their facilitators in the first instance. The students are encouraged to include their feedback in the module evaluation forms. The College is taking further formal steps to capture feedback, as evidenced by its recent implementation of the NSS.

2.58 While it is clear that the campus nature of the College presents a number of challenges in the area of student engagement, the College is making significant progress in addressing these and encouraging representation from all levels at all campuses. The system of student representation continues to develop, and the College is moving towards formal systems for gathering feedback from students. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.59 The College works with the awarding body to ensure that assessments are suitable, fair and reliable, with details of the College's approach to assessment set out in undergraduate and postgraduate marking policies revised for the start of the 2016-2017 academic session. The College has delegated responsibility for designing assessments and ensuring that learning outcomes are set at the relevant level and in line with the awarding bodies' academic expectations and templates, and all assessments are approved by the University as the awarding body. In order to ensure consistency of assessment practice and marking the College conducts marker training and provides assessment handbooks.

2.60 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.61 The review team evaluated and tested the effectiveness of the assessment and marking policies and practices in meetings with staff and students, and examined a range of documentation relating to assessment, including policies, procedures and reports.

2.62 The review team found evidence that the College has altered and improved its assessment practice and marker policy documentation in response to external examiner scrutiny and reporting. The College applies appropriate external benchmarks to learning outcomes and aligns these to level descriptors. College staff training and awareness takes place to ensure that all staff understand and engage with College and University processes and practices relating to assessment and marking.

2.63 Evidence from meetings with staff identified clear understanding of the processes for designing and setting assessments and mapping learning outcomes to assessment. The College has introduced formative and other modes of assessment. These are incorporated in assessment handbooks and include presentations, reflection and commentary on sermons, portfolios, and professional placement and development learning logs to test practitioner experience. Assessment and recognition of prior learning is undertaken by the College in line with the awarding body's policies, practices and templates, with ultimate approval residing with the University. Recent external examiner reports confirm that assessments and learning outcomes are appropriate and set at the correct level. The team found that the different assessment approaches supported the students well in their practice.

2.64 The review team was informed that formative assessment was introduced in 2016-2017 to provide further and effective opportunities for students to reflect on their academic development. Students confirmed that their feedback on the volume and timing of assessment, as well as on the quality of feedback, was taken into consideration.

2.65 Discussions with staff confirmed that the College had taken steps to strengthen processes to avoid academic misconduct, by reviewing its existing policy and aligning it with that of the awarding body. Effective communication and implementation of this policy and supporting materials had been effected through Moodle, with the aim of supporting students to undertake verifiable, fair and appropriate assessments, and avoid academic misconduct.

This system enables the College to monitor and report upon levels of academic misconduct. Accordingly, the review team **affirms** the steps taken to systematically monitor and report the implementation of the academic misconduct policy, including the application of penalties.

2.66 The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding body, ensures equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.67 The College has one external examiner for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision, whose role and responsibility are defined by the University as the awarding body. The awarding body is responsible for the appointment and briefing of external examiners, although the College may make recommendations. The University also provides access to regulatory and assessment information on the awarding body website. Details of the external examiner are published in the undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks, and reports are available to students via the VLE.

2.68 The College provides module and programme documentation and liaises with the external examiner concerning examination board arrangements. The external examiner signs off mark sheets to indicate confidence in the process of awarding and recording marks. Reports are sent to the University and copies received by the College. Following a report highlighting a number of issues with the undergraduate provision in June 2016, the College developed an action plan, and detailed steps have been taken to address the highlighted issues.

2.69 The above arrangements for the use of external examiners allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and students, and through a scrutiny of documentation, including external examiner reports and associated action plans.

2.71 External examiner responsibilities for assuring maintenance of standards include 'approving assessments and ensuring that they appropriately assess intended learning outcomes for each module, scrutinising marking to ensure that it is comparable to national benchmarks for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and attending Subject Assessment Panels'. In addition, the awarding body policy entails a differentiated approach to involvement of the external examiner in approving amendments to existing programmes, ranging from being informed of a change, to requiring endorsement. Effective evidence of requests to the external examiner concerning module amendments is in place.

2.72 The external examiner produces reports twice yearly. The annual (June) report covers academic standards of awards and assessment processes, comparability of standards and good practice, whereas the interim (February) report is briefer. The more recent external examiner reports indicate improvement in undergraduate academic provision, and point to good practice with respect to learning materials and marking.

2.73 The awarding body policy requires that the external examiner's comments form part of the annual quality assurance processes of the College. While not all students, nor all student representatives, were fully aware of the external examiner's role and reports, the College has arrangements in place to provide information about the external examiner in the student handbooks, and the annual reports are available to students on the VLE.

2.74 The College follows the awarding body requirements for engaging with external examiners and, through its quality assurance systems, makes appropriate use of external examiner reports to further develop and improve its provision. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.75 The College works within the awarding body's policies and procedures on the monitoring and periodic review of programmes, and its approach is set out in the College Quality Assurance Handbook. An internal process of mapping its quality assurance procedures and processes against the Quality Code has taken place, along with continuous and periodic programme reviews which incorporate student feedback and external examiner feedback to amend modules and courses.

2.76 The approach to continuous monitoring and review in place at the College includes Module Evaluation Forms, Facilitator Evaluation Forms, the Programme Director Reports and the Annual Report. The awarding body requires the College to produce annual monitoring reports at both programme level and institutional level, and this continuous monitoring within the College feeds into the Programme Directors' Annual Report, the College Enhancement Report and the Academic Dean's Report to the Trustees. The approach enables the College to meet the Expectation.

2.77 The review team evaluated the processes and practices with regard to annual monitoring, periodic review and action planning by reviewing key documentation, and discussing the operation of systems with staff and students.

2.78 There was evidence of student performance data being used for action planning in the annual monitoring and reporting cycle, and evidence of annual monitoring and review feeding up from lecturer level through to the Board of Trustees. Programme monitoring, review and reporting includes staff at all levels and enables Programme Directors to propose and respond to required module and course changes.

2.79 The annual Programme Directors' Reports incorporate student feedback from across the academic year, the findings from peer observations, student progression data and external examiner report findings to inform developments and enhancements to the programme of study for the following academic year.

2.80 The review team evaluated the use made by the College of annual monitoring reports and action plans, and external examiner feedback, and found evidence of the effective involvement of staff, students and external examiners at module and programme levels to monitor course quality and periodically review courses. Annual monitoring is in place which facilitates effective academic quality and standards being achieved and maintained; and action planning is carried out which is targeted at not only ensuring quality and standards but also aligning and improving the experience of its practitioner students.

2.81 The review team concludes that the College, with its awarding body, ensures that it operates effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes. The Expectation is therefore met, and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.82 The College has a four-stage procedure for student complaints, as detailed in its Student Complaints Policy and Procedure. This comprises an informal stage, a formal stage, an internal review, and a further appeal stage to the Board of Trustees. The College is a member of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) scheme, allowing students to pursue their complaint with the OIA after exhausting the internal procedures.

2.83 The College's Appeals Policy and Procedure sets out the procedure for making an academic appeal, including the valid grounds for an appeal. Appeals are first reviewed by a panel, and may then proceed to a hearing. After this stage, there is an internal review stage then a further review by the awarding body. Once all relevant College and awarding body procedures are exhausted, students may refer their appeal to the OIA.

2.84 The College's procedures for handling student complaints and academic appeals allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85 In testing the effectiveness of the College's approach, the review team examined the College's policies and their implementation and discussed these with a range of staff and students.

2.86 The College has recently revised its complaints and appeals procedures, and carried out a mapping exercise to the Quality Code at an Academic Team Meeting. One of the changes ensures that former students are able to use the Appeals Procedure. The procedures set out clear time limits for lodging an appeal or complaint, and include indicative timescales for the various stages.

2.87 Students met by the review team confirmed their awareness of the complaints and appeals policies, which are made available to students via the VLE. The students confirmed that they were able to raise issues informally before progressing to the formal procedure, reflecting the College's aim to encourage informal resolution of issues wherever possible.

2.88 Teaching staff informally resolve issues brought to them wherever possible, and are familiar with College procedures when issues are wider than their own responsibilities. A mid-semester tutorial is held each semester, where students are encouraged to raise any issues with their Campus Leader.

2.89 Appeals are reviewed by a panel comprising the Principal and another senior academic staff member. The policy states that appeals can be dismissed by the initial panel on the grounds that there is no valid remedy, although it was unclear what would constitute this. Where appeal hearings are needed, these are usually held by video link between the student's campus and the Head Office.

2.90 The College's policies and procedures on complaints and appeals are reviewed by the awarding body. An annual summary of complaints and appeals, and their outcomes, is prepared for the Board of Trustees to enable effective monitoring and oversight.

2.91 Policies and procedures are in place to enable the effective handling of student complaints and appeals, and a shared understanding is in place between staff and students

at the College on how to raise and address them. Central monitoring arrangements allow issues from all campuses to be considered developmentally. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.92 The College does not deliver joint or dual degrees and does not work with any other higher education providers that would fall within the scope of this chapter. The delivery of its awards takes place on eight sites, and each of these is specified in the agreement with the awarding body. The programmes can be delivered only at the premises approved by the University at validation.

2.93 The delivery of the undergraduate programme also relies on a significant placement element, forming an integral part of the programme and reflected in the programme learning outcomes. Placement work is embedded in the undergraduate module specifications, which include learning hours dedicated to it, and module assessments are designed with the placement learning outcomes in mind. There is a placement handbook detailing the processes and responsibilities involved.

2.94 The arrangements in place for delivering learning opportunities with others would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.95 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and students, placement supervisors (who are not staff of the College), and a representative of the awarding body. The team also considered a range of relevant documentation.

2.96 Students on undergraduate programmes are required to complete 13 hours per week in a placement setting, normally a church or similar organisation. Placement hubs are led by a cluster leader, or ForMission facilitator, who works closely with local placement providers and students in the supervision and support of the placements. A detailed handbook concerning the placement experience is provided. Students attend weekly cluster groups at the hub to support and monitor their placement experience. The facilitator (hub leader) provides a report on the student's attitude and performance, including skills. Placements do not form part of postgraduate programmes, although many students choose to work alongside their studies or seek their own extracurricular placements.

2.97 Following a recommendation from a previous Review for Specific Course Designation, the College recently redeveloped its placement matching processes and forms in an attempt to improve the suitability of placements. Now, for each placement, there must be an explicit agreement between the College, the student and the placement provider. This includes the signing of a contract by all parties, in which responsibilities are set out. The student agrees to be supervised and line-managed by the placement supervisor, and the placement supervisor provides opportunities for the student to complete the required placement 'asks' for their course and to provide other general placement experiences for the student. Placement supervisors, although they are not College staff, have an oversight, supervision and mentorship role for students during their placement hours, and report back to the College.

2.98 The placement supervisors do not have a role in assessment, but contribute significantly to the learning experience. The supervisor completes a report form 'evaluating the student's progress and performance on the placement'. A supervision log is also

completed by students and a placement activity schedule by supervisors. Mid-semester tutorials pick up on the experience of the student on placement, as do the student's journal portfolio and PDP reflective report.

2.99 The student submission notes that in some cases the placement supervisors did not understand the 'essence of the course', and the College and the students acknowledge that all parties could benefit from further events to bring together College staff and students.

2.100 The opportunity afforded to students through placements to apply theory in practice is well regarded by students and forms an integral and positive part of their academic and personal development. Placements provide a valuable opportunity for students to apply academic learning in a practical context and for practical experience on placements to inform their learning. The organisation of the cluster, with a cluster leader facilitating weekly cluster groups, is particularly effective in supporting students' experience of the placement. The review team considers the strong relationship with placement providers, which supports students in their personal and professional development, to be **good practice**.

2.101 The College has effective arrangements with placement providers to develop practice-based learning opportunities for students to support them personally and professionally. Therefore, 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 Institution does not award research degrees; therefore, this Expectation is not within the scope of the review.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.104 There are 10 applicable Expectations in this judgement area, and all of these are met, nine with a low risk and one (Expectation B2) with a moderate risk. This latter risk relates to the lack of external publication of the admissions policies.

2.105 Two recommendations are made in this area, and one of these explicitly addresses these concerns, encompassing ensuring that the admissions policy and the admissions complaints and appeals policy are published and accessible to prospective students. In addition, and in relation to Expectation B4, the College is recommended to review and monitor resource arrangements to ensure consistent access to physical and digital learning resources across all campuses.

2.106 The review team identified a specific feature of good practice in relation to Expectation B10, surrounding the strong relationship with placement providers which supports students in their personal and professional development. In addition, the team affirmed in relation to Expectation B6 the steps taken to systematically monitor and report the implementation of the academic misconduct policy, including the application of penalties.

2.107 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 College publishes information about its mission and values on its website as well as to prospective students in its prospectus. Course information is also provided online and in the prospectus, and the entry requirements are published alongside the course information.

3.2 Current students access information through the VLE, including course and assessment handbooks as well as policies and procedures. Important updates are posted on the VLE and sent to students by email.

3.3 Information for staff, including the staff handbook, is provided via a dedicated section on the VLE. The College also produces a Quality Assurance Handbook, which is reviewed annually.

3.4 The College's processes and approach to information allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The review team tested the College's approach to information through meetings with staff and students, and by reviewing external and internal information and policies.

3.6 The College prepares its handbook and website information, and these are reviewed by the awarding body prior to publication. Their content is based on the definitive records of the programmes. The prospectus contains detailed information about the programmes and their awards, admission criteria, fees and course structure and content. In this context, the review team has made a cross-referenced recommendation in Expectation B2 above in relation to making admissions information readily available to prospective students.

3.7 The website information for each programme is divided into sections that reflect those in the prospectus. The BA programme information is clear and matches the prospectus and definitive record, and students met by the review team commented that the information provided to them during the application process was useful.

3.8 The website information surrounding the MA programme, unlike the prospectus, does not make a clear distinction between the programme title and the pathways. The programme title and award titles are not listed on the web pages, which refer only to the 'MA Programme', and this is inconsistent with the definitive records held by the University and the College. It is felt that this information is not wholly clear, and has the potential to cause some confusion, especially when viewed alongside the prospectus. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College ensures that programme information is consistent with the definitive records.

3.9 Current students met by the review team were satisfied with the information they received at induction events. The students were aware that they could access policies and procedures through the VLE.

3.10 As one of the College's priority areas, the Quality Assurance Handbook was recently developed, and this sets out responsibilities for each area of quality assurance, the College's committee structure, and the specifications for programme information.

3.11 The information that the College produces is generally fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Relevant information is made available to the public, and throughout the student journey. The College has demonstrated its commitment to developing its internal documentation, through the recent production of the Quality Assurance Handbook. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.13 The one Expectation in this judgement area is met, with a low level of risk. There is a single recommendation relating to the College ensuring that programme information is consistent with the definitive records. In addition, a cross-referenced recommendation is made to Expectation B2, regarding the need to ensure that the admissions policy and the Admission Complaints and Appeals Policy are published and accessible to prospective students.

3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **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 College's approach to continuous improvement is encapsulated in its annual Enhancement Report. This report analyses a range of campus and cohort progression and student demographic data, including ethnicity, age, gender, qualifications on entry, progression and exit classification, with actions for improvements in specific areas.

4.2 The College is also subject to annual review by the awarding body at institutional level and produces in response an institutional-level College action plan. The arrangements in place enable the College to meet this Expectation.

4.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach to enhancement and in particular the documentary evidence of the analysis of student data across campuses. This was discussed at meetings with staff and students.

4.4 The College considers the Enhancement Report to be the first of a series of annual documents on improvements to the delivery of programmes and the student experience. While the current approach to reporting on enhancement activity appears operational in nature, the College has stated that the Enhancement Report will in the future draw on Programme Director Reports, student feedback, peer evaluation, external examiner reports, awarding body and various other sources to provide a more comprehensive enhancement plan.

4.5 This current report has been considered at the strategic level of the College through the Academic Dean's Report to the Board of Trustees, following which the Trustees required the development of key performance indicators around a number of areas including the quality of learning opportunities and student experience. The College has acknowledged that these actions have still to be implemented, and therefore the review team **recommends** that the College implements the actions identified for the continuous improvement of learning and teaching and the student experience.

4.6 On the whole, the College recognises and acts to take deliberate steps to improve the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The Enhancement Report is a first step, and the College plans to further develop strategic enhancement plans. Therefore, the review team concludes that the expectation for Enhancement is met and that the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The team did not identify any good practice or affirmations in relation to this Expectation.

4.8 The College has a process for identifying actions in relation to this Expectation, but does not clearly evidence their implementation. The team therefore recommended that the College should implement the actions identified for the continuous improvement of learning and teaching and the student experience.

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

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

QAA2039 - R9722 - Jan 18

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