



# Application for taught degree awarding powers: Hartpury College

## Scrutiny team report

February 2017

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## About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from Hartpury College for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2004. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2004 TDAP criteria,<sup>1</sup> namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

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<sup>1</sup> The TDAP criteria are available in Appendix 1 of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' Applications for the Grant of Taught Degree Awarding Powers, Research Degree Awarding Powers and University Title: Guidance for Applicant Organisations in England and Wales (August 2004), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32388-11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32388-11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance.pdf) (PDF, 304KB).

## Executive summary

### Governance and academic management

The College has a Corporation of 16 members with several appropriate subcommittees to discharge the governance responsibilities. Finance and General Purposes Committee together with the Audit Committee keep scrupulous oversight of the financial affairs of the College providing appropriate challenge to the Executive. The Vice-Principal Business and Finance has overall charge of the budget and this is managed prudently and rigorously. Budget allocation, resource planning and the HE Strategy are effectively linked.

While Corporation acts in a diligent and professional manner and the governors are mostly well informed, there is also sometimes a lack of clarity in decision making, exacerbated by the volume of, and time allocated to, business and the overrunning of time allocations. There is also evidence of duplication and overlapping business in the governance and academic committee structure which potentially contributes to a delay in achieving a clear resolution to issues.

The College has acquired further devolved powers from its validating University (the University of the West of England) over the past three years. During 2015-16 the College has developed and approved its own framework of policies and procedures, adapted and customised from those of the University who have agreed this framework to operate from September 2016.

Associate Faculty Board (AFB) is currently the senior deliberative committee, chaired by the Principal. It has a number of committees reporting to it, whose roles have been revised for the 2016-17 academic year. The relationship of AFB to the governance committee Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee (QuEST) has been a matter of development and adjustment with two reviews of it taking place during the course of this scrutiny.

The Vice-Principal and Dean of Higher Education has overall responsibility for higher education (HE) and provides strong leadership of the College, since her assumption of this role early in the scrutiny period. The College's senior HE leaders provide strong academic leadership and have a clear understanding of the external HE environment. Strength of academic leadership was less obvious at departmental level.

### Academic standards and quality assurance

The College has managed the operation of the University's framework competently and effectively, as confirmed by the QAA Higher Educational Review in July 2014. Gradually the additional devolved powers have successfully been put into operation and the College's own framework developed from that of the University. The procedures are operated effectively and with clear understanding by those with responsibility for them. Should TDAP be granted, the College has proposed a set of further regulations to reflect the new responsibilities, largely adopted from the University. They build upon the Hartpury Quality Enhancement Framework approved in June 2016.

There are appropriate and effective procedures for programme planning, approval and review. Considerable account is taken of employment sector involvement as the College organises a large number of work placements which benefit students.

Assessment procedures at the various stages of a programme are operated effectively with boards being effectively administered and procedures thoroughly understood. There is a chief external examiner who looks across all programmes to extrapolate trends and consistency of assessment practices.

Self-criticality has become more obvious since the arrival of the Principal and is certainly shared by senior staff. At departmental level, more emphasis is given to the management of operational issues with a focus on inward-looking discussions on process rather than a forward-looking debate on strategy and wider issues affecting the HE provision at the College. The more limited external experience of the wider HE sector of a number of staff, including those in more senior positions, is a contributory factor.

## **Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff**

At appointment staff are well-qualified. Recent new appointments have included staff with a wider range of HE experience. This shows the College's recognition that such experience is needed at departmental levels. Most staff have a teaching qualification or obtain one, as required, within two years of their appointment.

A scholarship committee, or its equivalent, has existed since 1997. It has previously proved difficult to engage a high proportion of staff in research and scholarship. In response, the College has introduced a number of supportive measures, including a recent Research Development Framework in order to involve and enhance the scholarship of staff. This is now beginning to bear fruit.

A majority of academic staff are now able to provide clear and relevant evidence of a knowledge and understanding of current research and scholarship in their discipline and that such knowledge and understanding could inform and enhance their teaching. Students recognise the research in which their tutors are engaged.

## **The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes**

Overall, the College has effective mechanisms to assure itself of the effectiveness of its teaching and learning, procedures for student feedback, complaints and appeals. Staff development is proactive and wide ranging although the level of some sessions might usefully be monitored before delivery. Fifty-two per cent of staff responded to the most recent staff survey and the College will wait to see the effect of its changes in conditions of service in the coming year. Students comment favourably on the effectiveness of induction and the provision of learning resources. Non-academic staff also have development programmes available to them. Information is accurate and up to date with an effective system of checks and sign-off in place. Administrative systems to manage student information have recently been further developed, and augmented by new IT systems to allow a smooth takeover of administrative functions from the University.

## **Privy Council's decision**

The Privy Council's decision is to grant Hartpury College renewable taught degree awarding powers from 26 July 2017 until 25 July 2023.

## Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team) appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by Hartpury College (the College).

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in February 2015, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Professor Andrew Cobb, Professor Tony Cryer, Professor Diane Meehan (scrutiny team members) and Mr David Batty (secretary). The detailed scrutiny and preparation of the draft report was managed on behalf of QAA by Dr Penny McCracken, Assistant Director. Following Dr McCracken's retirement, Mr Matthew Cott, Quality Assurance Manager, coordinated the production of the draft and final report.

The detailed scrutiny began in April 2015, culminating in a report to ACDAP in February 2017. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

## Key information about Hartpury College

Hartpury College was founded as an agricultural college in 1948, delivering a relatively narrow range of this specialist provision until 1990, when provision and student numbers expanded. It became an independent Further Education Corporation in 1992. The first higher education programme was introduced at that stage followed by an honours degree programme in 1994 and a master's programme began in 1999.

In order to support the expansion of the higher education portfolio, a 10-year partnership was established with the University of the West of England (UWE or the University), which took effect from 1997-98, whereby the College became an Associate faculty. After a favourable University-led review, a further 10-year agreement began in 2008-09. The HE student numbers at the College were initially allocated from the University and limited by the student number control but in 2011-12 the College successfully bid for its own numbers. From September 2014 all new enrolling students are from the College's own numbers.

The relationship with the University is very close and this enabled expertise and experience of managing higher education to be developed within the College and overseen closely by the University. Over the past few years (see Criterion B1 below) the University has increasingly devolved quality assurance processes to the College, confident in its ability to manage these effectively.

The College operates a mixed further and higher education economy with the balance of student numbers approximately 55:45, FE to HE. Over the past year the College has been engaged in discussion with the former Department of Business, Information and Skills (now the Department for Education) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England to explore its transition to the HE sector. Under the current arrangements, the HE student numbers do not reach the required 55 per cent of the total College numbers. These discussions are ongoing but are not expected to affect the entity which would be awarded TDAP, should this be granted.

# Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

## A Governance and academic management

### Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution; its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

### **Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives**

1 Corporation, the College's Board of Governors, is a legal body constituted under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; the structure of Corporation and its committees was reviewed in 2013 and as a result a number of changes were made including an increase in the number of meetings, a reduction in the number of members and standing committees of Corporation and clarification of governors' terms of office. Corporation currently consists of 16 members including 11 non-executive, one staff and two student members, one member from the University and the Principal. The non-executive members are drawn from a range of representative backgrounds and in 2016 the College has strengthened representation from those with HE and financial experience. Student members are elected by the student body, normally for a term of one year, with one student representing HE and the other FE; attendance by student members is variable. Corporation also has a President, who acts as a figurehead and receives papers. Corporation is required to meet at least once per academic term but generally meets bi-monthly; a strategic planning away day involving members of the Corporation, the President and the Executive is held in March each year. The work of Corporation is ably supported by the Clerk; papers are professionally presented and indicate the action required for each item.

2 In accordance with the Articles of Government for the College, Corporation delegates aspects of its work to its standing committees: Audit Committee, Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC), Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee (QuESt), Remuneration Committee, Search and Governance Committee and Special Committee.

3 Financial planning is driven by the Corporation. Detailed scrutiny of financial planning is devolved from Corporation to the FGPC which meets four times a year. Its objectives include ensuring that annual estimates of income and expenditure and annual financial accounts are prepared for approval by Corporation and that it receives regular statements of financial performance, that financial performance is monitored and appropriate action taken where necessary, and that a capital budget is prepared for approval by Corporation. FGPC is discharging its responsibilities in a diligent and effective manner.

4 Audit Committee, meeting three times a year, also plays a key role, advising Corporation on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's systems of internal control and its arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes, and for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The College uses both external and

internal auditors. Audit Committee advises Corporation on the overall audit strategy and the annual internal audit plans and recommends the financial statements to Corporation for approval.

5 The stewardship of the College's finances, led by the Vice-Principal Business and Finance/Deputy CEO is secure. Its finances are in good order and its financial planning relates to its strategic aims and objectives. Regular financial reporting and monitoring is evident in meetings of Finance and General Purposes Committee and Corporation as well as other groups such as College Executive. As a further education college (FEC), the College is an exempt charity and its financial sustainability is regulated under the English FE system by the Skills Funding Agency which currently classes the College's financial health as satisfactory. The College's operating result for the year ending 31 July 2015 showed a surplus of £839,000. A budgeted surplus for 2016-17 of £1,504,000 before Financial Reporting Standards 17 adjustments on a total income of £32,000,000 was reported to the Corporation meeting of July 2016. It was also reported at the same meeting that the expected outturn for the year ending 31 July 2016 stood at £1,448,000. The College's reserves also remain stable at around £10 million. The College has acknowledged its high gearing ratio (currently around 88 per cent) is expected to improve in 2016-17 as it repays some of its capital loans.

6 The College has invested £50 million in academic and specialist resources over the last 20 years. In 2011 the College extended an existing building to create HE specific facilities, and a second stage HE Zone incorporating a University Learning Centre (ULC) was opened in 2014. The College continues to invest in its infrastructure to support its strategic aims; for example, it has recently approved plans to build new student accommodation on site for FE students, thereby releasing accommodation for HE students. Failure to raise sufficient funds for capital projects remains within the College's top ten risks (second as of July 2016).

7 The budget allocation process is linked to the underpinning strategies including the College's HE strategy, the latter having been revised and agreed by Corporation in March 2016. Resource planning is linked to strategic planning and is also considered during curriculum development, annual monitoring and periodic review and programme closure. The College has recently reviewed the timing of its strategic planning process to ensure closer alignment with the budgeting process. HE Academic Budgets are overseen by the Vice Principal and Dean Higher Education (Vice-Principal HE); budgets are monitored and if necessary challenged by Corporation. For example, in 2013-14 in-year monitoring identified concerns in expenditure and, as a result, the Corporation challenged the senior management to revisit the budget in a year, adjust it and propose an updated submission for approval. The outcome was the achievement of the revised budget by the end of the budgetary year.

8 Ultimate responsibility for academic and quality assurance of the University's awards rests with the University's Academic Board delegated from its Board of Governors as set out in the Academic Agreement with the College. The College has well-established arrangements in place for the oversight of its HE provision and activities. QuEST, formerly Quality and Standards Committee, has devolved responsibility from Corporation for the scrutiny of standards and quality assurance and enhancement for both FE and HE. Both Corporation and QuEST receive regular reports from the Vice-Principal HE covering items including scholarship, curriculum development, progress against higher education strategic objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and an annual HE report is discussed at QuEST and presented to Corporation. The College has recently noted that while QuEST is a key component of its governance structure, the committee is large and some of the business of QuEST duplicates that of the main Board (see paragraph 9); the scrutiny team agrees with this observation. To address this issue, the December 2015 meeting of Corporation referred

the matter to the Search and Governance Committee which recommended that while QuEST should remain as one committee covering both FE and HE, the number of members should be reduced; the recommendation was agreed by the May 2016 meeting of Corporation.

9 Associate Faculty Board (AFB), chaired by the Principal, reports to the University's Academic Board and, through QuEST, where its minutes are received, to Corporation. It is the College's intention that AFB will evolve into an Academic Board should TDAP be granted. Until recently AFB was supported by a number of standing committees including Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, Scholarship Committee and Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC), which has delegated responsibility and authority for the implementation and operational management of academic standards and quality assurance, and the Award Board. AFB is acting in accordance with its terms of reference. However, meetings of AFB cover a large number of items of business and the team observed that on occasion time management of the Board's business was inefficient. The College has proposed some changes to its committee structure from 2016-17, when the standing committees of AFB will be Curriculum Approval Committee (CAC), Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee, Scholarship Committee and Programme Examination Boards.

10 During the scrutiny process the team sought to clarify the relationship between AFB (the principal HE academic body) and QuEST (a governance committee). In 2014 the College reviewed the relationship between the two committees, a process which included consultation with the University and external advisers. This resulted in some modifications being made including the Principal taking over as Chair of AFB and clarification of the reporting lines between AFB, QuEST and Corporation. The team was informed by the College that the key deliberative academic route is through AFB. However the relationship between AFB and QuEST continues to be debated by the College; for example the minutes of QuEST of November 2015 suggested that the links from QuEST to AFB and the relationship between them should be further reviewed. The issue was further discussed in the QuEST meeting of June 2016 which concluded that while the link between QuEST and AFB was adequate, the terms of reference for both committees should be kept under review.

11 The College's Strategy, Vision 2020, developed in 2015, supported by its HE strategy, sets out clearly its ambitions in relation to HE. In its Application, the College noted the establishment, over the past two years, of a set of KPIs in three areas, higher education (HE), further education (FE) and finance. These built on previous practice, aligning to the strategic aims of the College. HE academic performance against the associated KPIs is actively monitored at meetings of AFB and QuEST, and KPIs are presented to each meeting of Corporation so that action may be taken if issues are flagged. For example, the College's good degree performance fell from 57 per cent to 49 per cent in 2013 and this was considered by an 'investigatory group'. The resulting action plan was monitored by AFB. The HE KPIs for 2015-16 include: average tariff on entry, National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction, scholarship, HEA accreditation, staff:student ratios, applications, achievement and graduate destinations. An amended set of KPIs has been approved for 2016-17 reflecting changes in the external HE environment.

12 Corporation meets regularly to oversee the business of the College of which HE forms a significant part. Financial management is sound and the College continues to invest in its resources including those relating to its HE provision. The College continues to debate the relationship between QuEST (part of its governance structure) and AFB (the principal HE Academic Body) in the oversight of quality and standards.

13 Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance



14 While the College's programmes of study lead to undergraduate and postgraduate awards of the University, the College was allocated its own HE student numbers by HEFCE in 2011-12. From September 2014 all new HE students were enrolled within the College's own allocated student numbers until HEFCE removed student number controls from 2015-16. The College takes account of a number of key external reference points in its HE activities. In 2014 the College established a group to map its policies and procedures against emerging changes in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) resulting in an action plan overseen by ASQC. The reports of the most recent QAA reviews of the College, namely Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) 2011 and the Higher Education Review (HER) 2014, and its external examiner reports confirm the College's alignment with the requirements of the Quality Code (and its predecessor), including the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

15 Until September 2016, the College has operated the University's Quality Management and Enhancement Framework (QMEF) in the development approval and monitoring of its academic provision. As part of its preparations should TDAP be granted, the College has developed its own academic framework, the Hartpury Quality Enhancement Framework (HQEF), adapting the University's QMEF to align better with the 'size, nature and strategic direction' of the College, reduce 'unnecessary complexity' and encourage 'continuous enhancement'. The University has agreed that this can be implemented from September 2016. The College has mapped the HQEF against the Chapters of the Quality Code and its development involved consultation with staff, students and the University as well as input from external advisers. Reference is also made to the Quality Code in the College's Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy (TLS).

16 Until July 2016, course proposals were scrutinised internally through the College's Academic Standards and Quality Committee, Curriculum Approval and Scrutiny Panel (ASQC-CASP) prior to being submitted through ASQC to the University's Curriculum Approval Panel (CAP) for approval. From July 2016, curriculum approval will take place through a College-based Curriculum Approval Committee held within, and chaired by, staff from the College. Course proposals are aligned with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and several of the College's courses meet the requirements of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

17 In its Application, the College noted that its senior staff have links to relevant external bodies and groups and that staff engage with consultations on policy and sector developments. Staff are kept apprised of the Quality Code and other external reference points in a number of ways including through staff induction, staff development events, the HE Staff virtual learning environment (VLE) and the HE Staff Handbook. The College also makes routine use of external advisers to provide feedback on policy and regulatory developments including as members on its Development and Transitional Working Group.

18 The scrutiny team saw that there is clear evidence that the College's HE activities take full account of relevant legislation, the Quality Code and associated guidance, and that members of the senior management team and the Associate Deans are engaged with, and fully cognisant of, the external educational environment. They also saw evidence of academic staff engaging with external bodies such as Landex and other PSRBs, for example contributing to the development of the Veterinary Nursing Subject Benchmark Statement. The College is also committed to ensuring that there are significant levels of staff engagement with the HEA (see paragraphs 60, 108, 125, 169).

**Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students**

19 The College's mission statement is contained within its Strategy, Vision 2020. Supported by a number of enabling strategies, the main strategy was developed in 2015. Key HE strategies, policies and regulations, including the University's QMEF and from 2016-17, the College's HQEF, are made available to staff on the College's website and/or through the HE staff VLE, are referred to within the College's comprehensive HE Staff Handbook and through staff development and briefing events. Key information is also included in the College's HE-specific staff induction. The College's Middle Management Forum, responsible to the College Executive, has recently been set up to provide a cross-College forum for line managers below executive level, to disseminate key information, share best practice and provide staff development opportunities. One of its responsibilities is to cascade key College information and share College strategies.

20 Staff met by the scrutiny team confirmed that they are consulted about and kept informed of the development of the College's key strategies and policies; students are members of key committees and also confirmed that they are kept informed of strategy and policy.

21 The consistency of application of policy and regulations is supported through the College's key committees; its well established quality cycle, designed to ensure that relevant committees and/or management groups monitor and review quality and standards in a timely and systematic way; the dedicated quality team led by the Assistant Dean Quality and Standards; and the HE Academic Register. The team's observation of assessment boards also confirmed the widespread understanding and consistent application of policy and regulations; these are competently chaired by College staff, with due regard paid to the University's regulatory framework. The team concluded that the College's HE mission and associated policies and systems are understood and consistently applied.

**There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision**

22 The College currently has an established governance structure. Corporation (see paragraph 1) consists of 16 members, the maximum number currently allowed; members of the Senior Management Team are in attendance at Corporation meetings. The Academic Agreement defines the governance relationship between the University and College including a representative of the College's Board of Governors being co-opted onto the University's governing body. Additionally, the University is able to nominate a senior member of the University to the College's Board of Governors. In its Application, the College noted that this arrangement would continue for at least three years should TDAP be granted.

23 The Search and Governance Committee is responsible for helping to ensure that there is a full complement of well-qualified and experienced members of the Corporation and through its members, that there is an appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and experience which aligns with the business of the College. Corporation uses a set of governance targets which includes the requirement for all governors to participate in an annual Governor Skills and Knowledge Evaluation, the results of which are considered within both annual training plans and new governor recruitment. Corporation has recently taken the opportunity to renew its membership on the retirement and resignation of some of its members and has attempted to address gender balance, although the Corporation retains a majority of male members. A paper reviewing the College's governance targets presented to Corporation in December 2015 showed that four of the governance targets had been missed, namely: the

need to ensure that Corporation is representative of the communities it serves in gender ethnicity and other factors; achievement of 90 per cent attendance of governors at Corporation and Committee meetings (88.1 per cent was achieved); only two rather than three training events were organised for governors and the response rate in relation to the Governor's self-assessment exercise was noted as poor and the outcomes not representative, with an external assessment proposed for 2016-17. The scrutiny team was subsequently advised that the final overall attendance at Corporation and Committee meetings was 90.3 per cent and that some of the time allotted for training was used for presentations to Corporation from external sector experts.

24 Governors are provided with guidance relating to the scope of their duties, and the distinction between governance and academic management, through selection and induction. There is an annual programme of governor training including away days and an annual strategic planning event. Staff are made aware of the Corporation and its function through induction, the HE staff handbook, the website and the staff intranet, and students and student representatives through the student intranet and student representative training. Link governors are aligned to a chosen curriculum, or support area, rotated annually, with the aim of creating a better understanding of the way in which strategic decisions of the governing body influence provision at an operational level. In its Application, the College noted that the link governor activity is monitored closely. There is a requirement for a record of link visits to be verbally reported to meetings of Corporation by the relevant governor, for QuEST to report to Corporation on the calendar of work for link governors, and for an annual report by the Clerk to the July meeting of Corporation. However, despite these requirements, the team could find no evidence of recent systematic reporting back to Corporation on these visits.

25 The scrutiny team's observations have shown that while Corporation acts in a diligent and professional manner and the governors are mostly well informed, there is also sometimes a lack of clarity in relation to decision making which is exacerbated by the volume of, and time allocated to, business and the overrunning of time allocations. There is also evidence of duplication and overlapping business throughout the governance and academic committee structure which potentially contributes to a delay in achieving a clear resolution to issues.

26 As noted in paragraph 9, AFB, chaired by the Principal, is the main academic body of the College. AFB is supported by a number of standing committees (some of which have subcommittees) which, until September 2016, were Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, Scholarship, Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC), which has delegated responsibility and authority for the implementation and operational management of academic standards and quality assurance, and the Award Board. Departmental Committee Meetings (DCMs), chaired by relevant heads of department; were, until the academic year 2016-17, formed around three subject groupings, Equine, Animal and Land Sciences (including Veterinary Nursing) and Sport. From 2016-17, these have been renamed as Department Committees and are clustered into four subject areas: Veterinary Nursing; Animal and Agriculture; Sport; and Equine. These committees are responsible to ASQC for the implementation of the College's quality and standards procedures as they relate to taught provision within the departments. HE Executive meets fortnightly and is a key forum for monitoring of HE activity throughout the year and regular HE reports are provided to senior management and the governors.

27 These arrangements and reporting lines ensure that HE matters are fully deliberated at all levels of the organisation. However, the team noted that for a small College there was a relatively large number of committees with some duplication of business and that the progress of some items can be slow. The College's revised committee structure, in

operation from 2016-17 (see paragraph 9), has the potential to address this issue resulting as it does in some 40 fewer meetings than required by the previous structure.

### **There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision**

28 The current Principal was appointed in September 2012. The Principal is supported by the Vice-Principal and Dean of HE (Vice Principal HE), the Vice-Principal FE, the Vice-Principal and Director of Finance/Deputy CEO and the Director of human resources and Residential Services who, together with the Principal, form the Senior Management Team (SMT; previously the Principal's Management Group). The wider College Executive is formed from the members of the SMT together with the Directors of Marketing and Admissions, Facilities and Elite Sports, and the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Scholarship.

29 The senior HE staffing structure has recently been revised following the departure of several senior staff; it includes the Associate Deans for Quality and Standards and Teaching Learning and Scholarship, Heads of Department, the Transition Project Manager and a number of Principal Lecturers. Following the restructuring, Associate Deans no longer have dual roles and have a central rather than a departmental responsibility. During the scrutiny period three members of the SMT left the College including the previous Vice Principal HE. Recently, the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Scholarship has also left and been replaced, albeit the new postholder has a slightly different remit, together with an additional fractional (0.8) post of Director of the Graduate School.

30 Responsibility for HE activity rests with the Vice-Principal HE who is in attendance at Corporation, is a member of the Senior Management Group and the wider College Executive, and chairs ASQC and HE Executive. The Vice-Principal HE is responsible for leadership and direction of the College's HE strategic developments, ensuring management information is provided to the governing body, College managers and external agencies. Additionally, the role holder keeps a watching brief on the external environment.

31 The Vice-Principal HE is supported by the Associate Deans for Quality and Standards and Learning, Teaching and Scholarship who, together with the Principal, the four Heads of Department, the HE Registrar, the Transition Project Manager, the Head of Teaching and Learning, Head of Inclusivity, the Director of Employability and Partnerships, the Head of Admissions and Head of Quality, form the HE Executive which meets fortnightly and is a key forum for monitoring of HE activity throughout the year. The Heads of Department manage the four departments supported by a team of subject managers, programme managers and teaching staff.

32 The scrutiny team's observations of HE-related committees and meetings provided evidence that the College's senior HE leaders, who are spread quite thinly chairing many of the key College committees and groups, provide strong academic leadership and have a clear understanding of the external HE environment. These observations also led the team to conclude that this strength of academic leadership was less obvious at departmental level (see also paragraph 89).

### **The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders**

33 The College's partnership with the University has resulted in it establishing internal procedures for setting and maintaining standards and for assuring and enhancing the quality of its HE provision, comprising a combination of College-specific practices, where the College exercises a number of delegated powers from the University and adopted University

practices. The College actively contributes to the approval, monitoring and review of the latter (see Criterion B).

34 The College develops its policies and procedures in a collegiate manner. Staff confirmed that the College communicates these through a number of mechanisms including the HE Staff Handbook, the staff VLE, its website, through the committee structure, staff development and briefing events and through departmental meetings. Staff and students are represented on key HE committees, including AFB and its standing committees.

### **Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified**

35 The College currently follows the University's academic regulations and either adopts or adapts the underpinning quality assurance and enhancement arrangements, having for some time operated variant regulations for three awards with PSRB requirements and from 2015-16 its own variant regulations across its entire provision. The College feeds into the design, approval and review of the University regulations and has membership on the University's Academic Board; the application of the regulations is largely devolved to the College by the University, including the chairing of Award and Field boards. As noted earlier, the College has now developed its own Academic Framework, the Hartpury Quality Enhancement Framework (HQEF), based on the University's QMEF and adapted to its own context.

36 The College's quality cycle is designed to ensure that relevant committees and/or management groups monitor and review quality and standards in a timely and systematic way. Embedded within the quality cycle is the regular review of HE academic policies, systems and activities including identification of responsibilities, committees and timelines. The Quality Cycle is owned by HE Executive and is a standing item on the agenda; the Quality Cycle is reviewed at the start of each academic year and includes all mandatory and pre-planned quality-related activities. Annual review procedures are embedded within the Quality Cycle and from 2014-15, an Annual HE Report has been presented to Corporation via QuEST.

37 In its Application, the College noted its long-established culture of review and enhancement, and the team found evidence to support this view including evidence of extensive and timely reporting to the Corporation on both positive and negative issues.

### **Academic risk and change management strategies are effective**

38 The College has an effective approach to the management of risk. Its Corporate Risk Policy which is available on its website, sets out its overall approach to risk and the key roles and responsibilities for the management of risk. The College maintains a comprehensive Risk Register with risks clustered under a number of headings. Corporation, Audit Committee and the Risk Management Group (RMG) play key roles in the oversight of risk. The College's risk register is owned and actively managed by the Risk Management Group, chaired by the Vice-Principal Business and Finance with membership including senior and middle managers and the Clerk to the governors. It meets at least four times a year and on each occasion the register is discussed and subsequently approved at each meeting of Audit Committee and risk is a standing item on senior management meetings including the SMT and the College Executive where the top 10 risks are considered. There is a separate HE risk register and as a member of the Risk Management Group the Vice-Principal HE takes relevant items back to the HE Executive for review and discussion.

39 An internal audit of the College's risk management took place in 2014 and appropriate action was taken to address the recommendation that, 'there is a clear

consideration of the College's risk appetite, on an overall basis and with regard to specific areas of risk, as part of the College's risk management framework'.

40 The College's People, Performance and Development Enabling Strategy (one of the enabling strategies supporting the College's Strategy Vision 2020), includes as a strategic priority, 'the development of strong and effective leaders' with the vision and energy to achieve the College's strategic aims and notes that this aim will be supported through the development of a number of capabilities including change management. The enabling strategy is subject to annual review. A similar objective was previously included in the College's human resources Strategy 2013-16. Staff indicated that the College's recent approach to change had been effective.

41 In its Application, the College provided, as an example of effective change management, the transfer in 2011 of the management of its library from the University to the College with no resulting reduction in the quality of service or resource, rather investment in facilities to support the student experience at the College, including a self-issue system allowing students to have control and responsibility for their library accounts and borrowing which resulted in positive student feedback. The College also successfully managed the transfer of responsibility for HE admissions from the University ahead of the 2013-14 recruitment cycle, the process was noted as well managed in the Higher Education Review 2014 report.

### **Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk**

42 Until August 2016, the College followed the University's academic framework (QMEF); from September 2016 it will, with the University's approval, operate its own version of the framework, the HQEF. While the University retains ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of the awards offered through the College, significant elements of the University's procedures have been incrementally delegated to the College, particularly over the past three years. Evidence of robustness includes the University's review of its partnership with the College in 2009 which led to a renewal of the academic agreement for a further 10 years and the continued positive partnership with the University, the outcome of the QAA IQER in 2011 and Higher Education Review in 2014 and PSRB and external examiner feedback. Observation of assessment boards also provide evidence that the University's regulations and College variants are meticulously implemented.

43 In exercising its delegated responsibilities, the College ensures that its policies, procedures and practices take full account of relevant legislation and sector developments in relation to academic standards and these are subject to regular monitoring and review. Standards are initially considered during programme development and subsequently through monitoring and review processes. The team observed that the annual monitoring process is thorough and draws on a range of data; staff and students are involved in the process through informal programme team discussions as well as through formal meetings of programme and departmental committees.

44 The scrutiny team concludes that there are a variety of mechanisms in place to ensure that academic standards are not put at risk and that the College discharges its responsibilities conscientiously and competently and has appropriate structures in place.

### **The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted**

45 The College made the decision in 2012 to apply for TDAP and at the time this decision was embedded in the College's Strategic Vision 2012-15. Its current Strategy notes that achieving TDAP is being pursued as a priority to enable the College to further develop

its HE provision. Initial activity to support its aim of achieving TDAP was based around staffing, including the appointment of an Academic Registrar, establishing a quality team and appointing project managers for both admissions and TDAP, having taken responsibility for HE student admissions from the University in advance of the 2013-14 academic year. In 2014 the College set up a Development and Transitional Working Group (DTWG) to oversee its project plan for transition from pre to post TDAP, identifying the various areas and supporting systems which would need to be in place if TDAP was achieved including the development of its own academic framework, the HQEF.

46 In its Application, the College stated that it did not envisage that the exercising of degree awarding powers would require meaningful functional change and this was reflected in the team's meetings with the Principal and senior staff. Over the period of its partnership with the College the University has devolved a number of areas of responsibility and has signalled its confidence in the College's ability to exercise TDAP should this be granted (see para 48). The scrutiny team has also seen the College's sense of ownership develop over the period of the scrutiny as devolved from the University, sometimes at the request of the College. The College intends to continue its relationship with the University if TDAP is granted, albeit in a different form.

47 While initially the scrutiny team found little acknowledgment by the College that it may face additional challenges should TDAP be awarded, more recently the College clearly demonstrated its growing recognition of the potential impact, for example on its current structures. It debated whether they would be fit for purpose, particularly as it sees achieving TDAP as part of a continuum which includes applying for and achieving University status and eventually research degree awarding powers. Discussions have included its status as an FEC and whether TDAP is likely to be awarded to an FEC and its desire to establish itself as an HEC without detriment to its FE provision; it has also taken the opportunity to revise its Instruments and Articles of Government to illustrate its involvement in HE.

## **B Academic standards and quality assurance**

### **Criterion B1**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

**The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently**

48 The Application provides comprehensive and detailed supporting evidence for a regulatory framework in operation at the College that is implemented fully, conscientiously and consistently. It has been regularly endorsed by external reviews, including those by the University in 2009, by an IQER in 2011 and in a Higher Education Review in 2014.

49 As stated above (paragraph 15), the College has until August 2016, operated the University's regulatory framework, the Quality Management and Enhancement Framework (QMEF), with responsibilities similar to an internal faculty of the University. The QMEF was judged to be sound in the University's QAA Higher Education Review Report (2016) with the robust use of externality and industry. Strategic alliances were also recognised as strong. Significant areas of additional responsibility have been devolved to the College in recent years, including variant regulations for some programmes with specific professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, such as Veterinary Nursing, and

responsibility for student admissions since 2013-14. Further devolved responsibilities in 2013-14 included learning support, public information, student feedback and external reporting. In 2014-15 additional responsibilities were devolved for dealings with the Student Loans Company, establishing a Students' Union, international visa support, the assessment cycle and the establishment of the Associate Faculty Board (AFB). The AFB is designed to improve the quality of advice to the Principal and Corporation. In 2015-16, responsibility was also devolved for academic appeals and complaints, an independent careers service, curriculum structure, including variable module credit sizes of 15, 30, 45 and 60 credits according to module level, the transition from the University's VLE to another (Moodle) chosen and operated by the College, administering periodic curriculum review, arrangements with PSRBs and chairing Curriculum Approval Panels. The Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS) Veterinary Nursing was presented for approval at the first Curriculum Approval Panel to be devolved from the University, in accordance with the Academic Regulations and Procedures of the University, in July 2016. At this event, accreditation was also sought from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The Academic Board of the University has agreed to the devolution of curriculum design, approval and review, the training of external examiners, and programme monitoring and evaluation, in line with University processes from 2016-17. University representatives considered that significant progress had occurred at the College since 2009, especially with regard to a developing higher education culture and ethos, and that the College was an excellent partner.

50 As set out in paragraph 15, the College has developed its own regulatory framework in 2016 (HQEF), based on the University QMEF and, as of 2015-16, with its own student management system. Both the University and the College's management information systems will operate in the 2016-17 academic year for student numbers, while the student management system will be used in timetabling, the online submission of marks, and the piloting of plagiarism software.

51 During the development of the HQEF from the QMEF, there were opportunities for a wide range of staff to comment on drafts. Developments have been overseen by the Development and Transitional Working Group (DTWG) with regular reports to AFB. The final version was approved by the University Academic Board in June 2016 and launched in the College the following month, with full implementation planned for September 2016. This approval indicates confidence of the validating partner in the quality assurance processes operating in the College. The HQEF will encourage College ownership of its quality assurance system and further enhance opportunities for self-criticality and reflection. There is evidence of a self-critical approach in the design of the HQEF and the student management system.

52 Following the assessment regulations detailed in the QMEF, student progression is considered by examination boards held at the College, with the Award Board chaired by the Vice-Principal HE and the field board by the Associate Dean, Quality and Standards. The assessment regulations are well understood by academic and administrative staff, and are operated consistently and rigorously. Experience in operating these boards has been gained using University good practice and external examiner input. External examiners monitor the assessment and progress of students, endorse marking and the standards of outcomes. AFB has noted very positive external examiner comments.

### **A regulatory framework appropriate for the granting of the organisation's own higher education awards is in prospect**

53 Should TDAP be granted, the College has proposed a set of further regulations to reflect the new responsibilities, largely adopted from the University. They build upon the HQEF approved in June 2016. The AFB will become the Academic Board and phased plans



are in place to develop College-specific documentation. The Academic Registrar, appointed in 2013, leads the transition process with regular updates and reports to the DTWG. Links to the University will continue for at least three years from the possible granting of TDAP in order to allow students registered on University programmes to be able to complete their studies as University students. It will also allow further collaboration with the University in the development of future postgraduate research degree programmes.

#### **Criterion B2**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

#### **Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)***

54 The HQEF is the process which ensures that the curriculum is aligned with the FHEQ. Evidence from validations demonstrates the appropriate use of the FHEQ across academic levels. Furthermore, the panel undertaking the 2016 periodic review for Land stated their complete confidence that the programmes under consideration were aligned with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. External examiners, including the Chief External Examiner, had a positive view of the College's awards at the relevant level of the FHEQ.

55 It was noted in award boards that the current convention, specified by the University, was to number both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at higher education from 1 to 3, rather than to use the FHEQ convention of 4 to 6 for undergraduate and 7 for postgraduate taught provision. This was perpetuated in the programme specification for the Veterinary Nursing Diploma in Professional Studies Curriculum Approval Panel. The College will adopt the FHEQ numbering convention should TDAP be granted.

#### **Management of higher education provision takes appropriate account of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, national guidance on programme specifications, and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies**

56 The College repeatedly states the importance it places on the Quality Code throughout its Application. Evidence from Subject Benchmark Statements and programme specifications indicates that the Quality Code is applied effectively, as endorsed in the 2014 Higher Education Review report. The report confirmed that UK expectations were being met with respect to the maintenance of threshold academic standards of awards.

57 Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee (ASEC) addresses matters relevant to the assessment of quality and standards. It also monitors links with the PSRBs, through the Associate Dean, Quality and Standards. Recent periodic reviews concerning two professional body approved programmes (Veterinary Nursing and Sports Therapy) confirmed alignment with PSRB requirements, and both professional bodies have confirmed their support for TDAP.

58 Corporation is assured that quality and standards are being maintained through a number of mechanisms, including reports from the SMT, data received in the minutes of College meetings, quality assurance monitoring reports, surveys and reports from QuEST. (For further details, see Criterion A).

**In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies**

59 The College follows the expectations of the QMEF and the HQEF for external peer review, and additionally uses vocational panels, alumni and external examiners to inform the process. As an example, the Curriculum Approval Panel for the Diploma in Professional Studies Veterinary Nursing involved representatives from both the University and the PSRB, included comments from the external examiner and consulted with the careers team, alumni, employers and existing students. The College proposes suitable candidates as external examiners to ASEC and to date the University has approved all appointments proposed by the College. This responsibility will pass to the new Academic Board, should TDAP be granted, which will also receive external examiner reports. The University is currently responsible for the induction and training of external examiners, who follow detailed reporting practices which will be adopted and delivered by the College in future, as detailed in the HQEF.

60 External examiner reports are comprehensive and demonstrate an active involvement with the College. For example, they have been consulted on assessment procedures, the design of the variant regulations and the Application for TDAP. This input from critical friends to inform College activities was noted positively in the 2014 Higher Education Review report.

61 Academic staff are encouraged to engage externally, through membership of external organisations. They also have extensive links with employers and placement providers, which are logged and updated on their academic profiles. The scrutiny team notes that Industry Panels are to be introduced during 2016-17 for each academic department, with management to be overseen by the Centre for Innovation, Careers and Enterprise (ICE). Visiting staff support staff development and the sharing of good practice. External input is seen as part of the annual process of teaching observation. The College also has an external consultant to the DTWG to advise on the development of policies and procedures post-TDAP. The College has also joined GuildHE in the summer of 2016 to share knowledge of the Higher Education sector and to attend relevant events. The Vice-Principal HE also attends the LANDEX HE Committee to ensure familiarity with practices and comparability of standards and to discuss issues affecting colleges in the land-based sector. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is also used for noting developments in pedagogy. On the other hand, there appears to be a relatively heavy reliance on the University and LANDEX, in comparison with the wider higher education sector, for the acquisition and dissemination of good practice.

**Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery**

62 The College currently follows the QMEF for programme approval, monitoring and review as incorporated into the HQEF in 2016. It considers curriculum development in terms of academic credibility, resource implications, market analysis and strategic alignment, all with student input, before engaging with the University. The ASQC (now Curriculum Approval Committee) scrutinises all documentation relevant to a programme and reports to the AFB. The Higher Education Review report 2014 confirmed this was a thorough and robust process and the scrutiny team concurs with this view.

63 Annual review also follows the HQEF and uses templates developed from the QMEF. External examiners are given access to module reports and their scrutiny offers

additional feedback. Annual Departmental Enhancement Plans include a detailed Action Plan which is monitored by the HE Executive and approved by the ASEC which replaced the ASQC and LTEC at the start of the 2016-17 academic year. The 2014 Higher Education Review report confirmed that a rigorous annual review process is undertaken at module, programme and departmental level and the team confirms that this is the case.

64 Periodic review is also a thorough and rigorous University process adopted by the College. Again, the ASQC (now Curriculum Approval Committee) monitors the reviews, their outcomes and action plans. Student involvement in this process has been commended by the University. As an example, in 2015 ASQC considered the report and action plan of the periodic review of the suite of animal provision, which consisted of seven programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The panel expressed complete confidence in the standard of the provision and identified nine commendations and seven recommendations.

### **There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation**

65 Academic planning is closely aligned to resource allocation both in regular meetings of the SMT and on an annual basis. Corporation also plays an effective and over-arching role in the link between academic planning and resource allocation. Resource requirements are also considered during curriculum development and approval. By approving a new curriculum proposal, the College is committed to resourcing its development, and resource needs are fed into the budget allocation process. Resource allocation is also influenced by student, staff, industry and placement-provider feedback. As an example, the SMT considers that the expansion of higher education numbers should be proportional to the number of available beds in halls of residence, and more are planned. The revised strategic review cycle ties in resources and budgeting plans. Both the Higher Education Executive Committee and ASEC have identified the need for more academic staff to undertake the supervision and marking of postgraduate dissertations and undergraduate projects in 2016-17. This requirement will inform the budget planning process in early 2017.

66 Budget allocation is an annual process. At the start of the year the principles are discussed and agreed at College Executive and the Senior Management Team (previously Principal's Management Group), in alignment with the College Strategy. Budget proposals are then formulated at department level, after widespread consultation at all levels of the College, including students. Academic budgets for HE are all overseen by the Vice-Principal HE. They are then scrutinised by the Stand submitted to Corporation for final approval. Once approved, monitoring occurs at both a strategic level and operationally with budget holders.

67 There is evidence that additional academic and support staff are being appointed in preparation for possible further devolved responsibilities and Corporation have allocated an additional £250,000 for the appointment of additional HE staff in 2016-17.

#### **Criterion B3**

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

### **Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes**

68 The Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy (TLS Strategy) (2014-17) underpins teaching and learning at the College. It focuses on five key principles: a high

quality experience; a focus on employability; fostering a culture of inclusive scholarship, research and practice; and the promotion of knowledge-exchange partnerships. It was developed in consultation with staff, students and with external input. The strategy is monitored and reviewed by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC), now ASEC, with regular updates to AFB. Engagement with the TLS Strategy is sought and confirmed at programme approval and periodic curriculum review. Academic department action plans review the performance of the department in the last academic year and consider key areas of focus for the following year in line with Hartpury 2020, the HE Strategic Plan and the TLS Strategy, according to a standard pro forma outlined in the HQEF in which each key principle is addressed. This Enhancement Plan is submitted to ASEC for approval.

69 A new Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy is in development in 2016/17. It will align with key higher education drivers, such as the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2021, and will support the transition of the College to the Higher Education sector.

70 This strategy also informs HE staff development activity, scholarship and staff performance management. Programme specifications state how programmes align with the strategy. Annual monitoring and periodic curriculum review ensure that the Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy is applied consistently.

#### **Relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, the organisation's policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review**

71 College staff teaching, developing and reviewing higher education programmes have ready access to extensive guidance and support on policies and procedures which are on the staff VLE and in the comprehensive staff development handbook. It is intended that relevant information on University sites, including examples of best practice, will be incorporated into the HQEF. Staff will be guided through the HQEF for the start of the 2016-17 Academic Year. As examples, there have been staff development activities on the use of new packages in Moodle, and the College will ensure that all academic staff and students are clear and supported about the changes relating to the introduction of the HQEF and the new committee structure. The College will also support regular contact between academic staff and external experts, professional and academic societies, using the Staff Development Fund. Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored.

72 While the Academic Board at the University has the ultimate responsibility for amending and approving new programme proposals, the College ensures that such responsibilities are effectively overseen and discharged at College level through its committee structure. Comments from ASQC (now the Curriculum Approval Committee) are fed into AFB, QuEST and Corporation, before onward transmission to the University for approval. The HQEF advises that proposals for new curricula are submitted by a Head of Department to the HE Executive in advance of the new academic year with a Market Impact and Authorisation Form to be considered by February of the year prior to entry, allowing for a fully informed marketing cycle that should be completed in advance of the first enrolment. The Higher Education Executive received new curriculum proposals, including PgCert and PgDip Animal Behaviour and Welfare, PgCert Applied Animal Welfare, PgCert and PgDip Anthrozoology, PgCert Applied Anthrozoology, BSc (Hons) Applied Agriculture, BA (Hons) Horseracing International Business and BSc (Hons) Racehorse Performance and Rehabilitation.

73 Field and Award Boards have noted student performance in examinations as variable between programmes and levels, and poor attendance and engagement have been

identified as major contributors to weak performance. Additional teaching sessions have been introduced by the Department of Sport to enhance student motivation and performance, for both weaker candidates and those wishing to improve. While still early days, there is initial evidence in student achievement data that student performance has improved. Furthermore, an induction programme was introduced in September 2016 specifically for top-up students entering level 6 after a Foundation Degree. This includes bespoke sessions aimed to help their entry into College life. Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained.

74 There is currently only one programme with pathways, the Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing Science, which is a sandwich course. The programme as a whole is reviewed, at both module and programme level, as part of the annual monitoring and review process. A single programme manager reviews, ensures and maintains the overall coherence of the programme with input from both academic staff and student representatives in programme management committees. Should issues arise, they are considered in Departmental committees and the annual monitoring process.

#### **Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements**

75 Providers of learning support services are engaged in the process of programme development and approval, especially those requiring dedicated resources, and this input is monitored by the ASQC (now CAC). Student feedback is sought on the effectiveness of learning support services during annual monitoring and periodic curriculum review. The Higher Education Review 2014 report noted positive feedback from students regarding learning resources and concluded that the range of support and resources provided to all students was good practice.

#### **Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate**

76 The College currently does not offer any distance learning programmes. The Diploma in Professional Studies, Veterinary Nursing, is a new programme for delivery in January 2017. It will involve students to attend for one day each week at College, and be delivered over two years of study in the workplace, using a VLE. It is proposed that this work-based programme will be used in future as a template for further programmes at the College. QuEST has noted that there is existing familiarity and use of this particular VLE in the FE provision at the College. A central VLE team has already worked with the programme team and employers to develop this facility, with a new member of staff recently appointed to aid programme design. Staff development is planned to support this use of the VLE. The ability of the College to support and deliver blended-learning via the VLE remains to be demonstrated.

77 There were 520 higher education work placements approved by the College in the 2014-15 academic year. A student feedback questionnaire revealed many positive comments regarding the placement experience. It highlighted the need for improvements both in the advertising of placements in College and in improving staff contact with students while on placement. These areas will be prioritised for development and monitoring. The Placement Handbook has been well received and recognised as good practice by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

#### **Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards**

78 The higher education committee structure provides a framework to approve, monitor and review updates to the Quality Code. The Quality Code is embedded in

curriculum planning and approval, and by annual monitoring and review, as detailed in the HQEF. The College will continue to undertake regular reviews to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and up to date, and to ensure that standards are maintained. The QMEF of the University has provided the ultimate framework for these practices and is operated conscientiously by the College. The QMEF was judged to be sound, with strong references to externality and industry in the 2016 Higher Education Review of the University. Both IQER 2011 and Higher Education Review 2014 reports confirmed the success of the College in discharging its devolved responsibilities and to effectively maintain threshold standards.

### **Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff**

79 Expected learner achievements are communicated to students in several ways and in detailed documents. These include presentations at student induction, in the student diary and survival guide, the study skills handbook, the University academic regulations, the College assessment cycle, the graduate development programme, programme specifications and handbooks, module guides, assessment briefs and in individual tutorials with year tutors and module teams. Students commented to the team on the clarity of procedures and the accuracy of handbooks. They knew what was expected of them in assessments, and with regard to their dissertations and projects. Feedback is also provided and discussed in termly Programme Management Committees with academic staff and student representatives in attendance.

80 The Higher Education Review 2014 report endorsed the College's approach to assessment as robust, with expectations clearly articulated and communicated to students and staff. The scrutiny team agrees with this. The higher education staff handbook is a detailed and comprehensive aid for staff regarding assessment, with extensive guidance to support best practice. The Staff Handbook 2015-16, updated in September 2015, contained appendices covering instructions for staff on the use of Moodle, and updates in modules and programmes. Standard templates for key documents are revisited annually and have been highlighted as good practice by external examiners, who have also confirmed that assessment tasks are appropriate. Internal verification processes ensure that assessments are aligned to learning outcomes, as identified as good practice by the University.

### **Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery**

81 Assessment processes are appropriate and the College ensures that students have achieved their intended learning outcomes for the award of their programme of study. This is achieved during curriculum design and approval, annual and periodic review. It is underpinned by programme and module specifications, and assessment briefs, with internal verification and external examiner scrutiny. Observation of the ASQC-CASP indicates that assessment was carefully considered at both module and programme level. Assessments are mapped to intended learning outcomes. It is intended to continue the process, should TDAP be granted. Annual review ensures fitness for purpose. Academic staff can choose from a range of optional sessions to tailor assessment-related staff development to their individual needs.

82 The Recognition of Prior Learning Panel, chaired by the Associate Dean, Quality and Standards, considers the accreditation of prior learning. It was revised in 2014, in recognition of the Quality Code. Programme managers make recommendations to the Panel, who apply the regulations consistently, with rigour and fairness. An annual report of the Panel is considered by ASQC (from September 2016, ASEC).

**Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking**

83 The maintenance of academic standards is ensured by following University policies and procedures. The Associate Dean, Quality and Standards, ensures that the interpretation of the assessment regulations is consistent, keeping in mind extenuating circumstances, the recognition of prior learning, condonement and opportunities for referral.

84 The QMEF contains the criteria for the nomination and approval of external examiners, which are largely continued unchanged by the College in the HQEF. External examiners are appropriately qualified and undertake an induction process at the University. They come from a wide range of higher education institutions in the UK with relevant subject expertise. With few exceptions, their reports confirm a consistency of marking between internal and external markers. They also confirm that student learning opportunities are good and that the academic staff are student-centred. The Chief External Examiner additionally confirmed that the consistency of marking was maintained. A review of all external examiner reports from 2015/16 has been presented to ASEC. It reports a high level of confidence in student performance, knowledge and understanding; noted good practice in assessment methods, with strengths in industrial relevance; and expressed confidence in the ability of the College to implement the regulations and PSRB variants.

**The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning**

85 The Quality Cycle includes the key mechanisms of monitoring throughout the academic year. Field boards are responsible for determining that all assessments are appropriately scrutinised and marked, and that the assessments are properly conducted. Assessment outcomes are taken into account in Departmental Enhancement Reports, and in the planning and subsequent delivery and review of academic programmes. Module files are reviewed before the relevant board by a senior higher education manager and the external examiner. Any issues are discussed and resolved in the field board. Comments from academic staff in Award Boards imply that assessment outcomes are taken into account in the planning and subsequent delivery of academic programmes.

**Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded**

86 Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and that, in doing so, the best interests of the students are safeguarded. Programme closure is initially considered by the Higher Education Executive and the AFB, prior to discussion in Corporation and the University. As an example, the review of Equine Dentistry in 2010 led to the closure of the programme. The quality of the student experience is cited as a key criterion in this process. The final decision is taken in Corporation.

87 A meeting of the AFB highlighted the process in action, with the discontinuation of a named award, Foundation Degree in Equine Management, which had not recruited for two years. The Periodic Curriculum Review, Land, also proposed to discontinue existing countryside and conservation programmes due to a lack of recruitment. More recently, a decision was taken to close the BSc (Hons) Sports Performance to first year entry due to a declining enrolment.

#### **Criterion B4**

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

#### **Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review**

88 The Application notes the commendation in the Higher Education Review 2014 report of the College's approach to enhancing student learning opportunities, underpinned by continuous improvement. It lists mechanisms which support critical self-analysis, including committee structures, management structure, annual monitoring and review, periodic review, the annual performance review of staff, and the review and evaluation of teaching practice. Many of these mechanisms incorporate external input and feedback, especially from PSRBs and employers closely linked to academic programmes.

89 Self-critical analysis is a work in progress in the College. There has been a major shift in culture and style with the appointment in 2012 of the new Principal, who has encouraged academic staff to become more challenging of existing processes. Self-criticality and reflection are evident in meetings of the SMT, in the Principal's Reports to Corporation, and in the Higher Education Annual Report presented by the Vice-Principal HE. It was also seen in a review of the committee structures in College by the Vice-Principal HE and the Associate Dean, Quality and Standards which was appropriately self-critical and strategic in approach. It is less evident, however, in meetings of the academic departments. Departmental meetings operate to a fixed agenda and discussions are invariably inward-looking and operational. Some academic staff, including those in more senior positions, appear to have limited HE-relevant external experience at a level sufficient to make significant contributions to discussions on what constitutes good practice in the wider HE sector. Thus, discussions in committees often take the form of a detailed consideration of operational action plans, rather than strategic imperatives facing the College, and often miss references to good practice elsewhere in the HE sector. An example is the relative lack of reference to sector-wide metrics in key performance indicators, with no KPI being used for postgraduate taught programmes. There is an imbalance in the management of operational issues between a focus on inward-looking discussions on process, and a forward-looking debate on strategy and wider issues affecting the HE provision at the College. The administration of teaching tends to dominate staff time and activity (see also paragraph 105).

90 More recently there have been some more positive signs of a change. Documentation submitted to events in the spring of 2016 (Periodic Curriculum Review, Land; Curriculum Approval Panel, Veterinary Nursing; HQEF) have been more reflective and self-critical in content. The team has also noted that the Departmental Action Plans, as submitted to ASEC in November 2016, were more reflective in content. Senior staff have also noted the need to promote a more self-critical approach in the academic departments, and the Vice-Principal and Dean HE has proposed individual meetings with academic staff to encourage this process. A SWOT analysis reported in an Equine Department meeting recognised a lack of opportunity for self-reflection as a weakness, with the need for more staff development and participation in external validation events and acting as external examiners elsewhere.

91 The tone of discussion at field and award boards has tended towards the self-congratulatory and inward looking. While the College benchmarks itself against other land-based colleges and universities, it accentuates the positives and appears to have not yet developed a pervasive self-critical perspective. As an example from AFB, it was noted



without further discussion that the NSS outcome for 2015 reported an overall student satisfaction of 86 per cent, which equated to a ranking of 147/387 nationally.

92 Research reports in the Scholarship Committee concentrate on the measurement of activity rather than its quality or effectiveness, according to nationally accepted criteria. Consequently, the assessment of quality and impact of existing research is under-developed and self-critical awareness needs more development among the HE staff community.

93 With the appointment of the Vice-Principal HE to the SMT during the 2015/16 academic year, the College is developing an increasingly self-reflective and focused approach. Examples include acceptance of the need for more staff development, the HQEF focused to the needs of the College and the increasingly self-critical, evidence-based reports to AFB and Corporation. The College also plans to be more proactive, with a meeting with OFFA to discuss an access agreement, utilise affiliation with the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) to facilitate further staff development, and joining GuildHE to gain further understanding and knowledge of the HE sector.

#### **Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes**

94 Clear mechanisms exist that feed into the Quality Cycle and the higher education committees. The internal verification process is incomplete until all issues have been resolved. Input from external examiners, external members of reviews, and recent graduates, also identify issues that feed into detailed action plans, which are monitored in Departmental Enhancement Plans in the process of annual monitoring and review. The College devotes considerable time and effort in the compilation and review of action plans in all its committees and departmental theme reports. These detailed plans are, however, invariably more operational than strategic in nature.

#### **Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review**

95 Curriculum design, approval and review were identified as features of good practice in Higher Education Review 2014. During curriculum design, both internal and external engagement is evident and input from industry is especially valued, via vocational panels, and membership of periodic review. Student input is evident from student-staff fora, departmental meetings and focus groups. Input is captured on a programme design and consultation form.

96 Periodic curriculum review involves scrutiny from internal academic staff from other departments, external academics and industrial representatives. The College pays particular attention to professional bodies in programme validation and review. As an example, the ASQC-CASP considered 11 modules relating to Veterinary Nursing programmes as a result of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' request to map content to competences, skills acquisition and to reflect new Subject Benchmark Statements.

97 As a feature of the College's teaching observation scheme, an external teaching and learning expert ensures that decisions are externally valid and standardised. These external experts also contribute to the staff development process with a view to continuous updating and improvements in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

## **Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement**

98 The College considers itself to be a mature and reflective provider of higher education, with an embedded self-critical approach. An environment of continuous improvement has been endorsed in the 2014 Higher Education Review report. The Corporation scrutinises higher education-specific KPIs at each meeting. These are aligned to the strategic higher education priorities of the College. The HE Executive informs each Corporation meeting and Corporation discusses the higher education strategic and operational plans, aligned to the College's Vision 2020. Detailed scrutiny takes place in QuEST and provides some evidence of self-critical assessment and for encouraging improvement.

99 Continuous improvement is driven by AFB and its subordinate committees. Thus, AFB has a standard agenda item on Quality and Enhancement. AFB considers an in-year key performance indicator report compiled by the Associate Dean, Quality and Standards, using retention, progression and achievement data, in addition to NSS overall satisfaction data and teaching observations. This data is noted for annual comparison. The Higher Education Annual Report also provides a focus for enhancement.

100 The College also has an independent relationship with HEFCE, which includes submission of the key information set, the NSS and other supporting statistics.

101 The HQEF relates to all taught programmes and associated provision at the College. The monitoring process aims to enhance curriculum provision, safeguards quality and standards through self-reflection, and identifies and disseminates good practice. The team concludes that the process for continuous improvement is suitably detailed and robust, uses a consistent set of standard, internally approved metrics and reflects feedback from academic staff, programme managers, professional bodies and industry, as well as student opinion.

## **C Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff**

### **Criterion C1**

The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

### **All higher education teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise**

102 Over the initial period of scrutiny the College's academic staff involved wholly in its HE activity was made up of 66 individuals (57 full-time equivalents). From the start of the 2016-17 this figure rose to 75 regular appointments plus two fixed-term appointees. Of this full complement of HE staff now in post, 20 (27 per cent) are part-time. From this make up it is possible to calculate the total full-time equivalent (FTE) staff to be 67.9. However, currently (October 2016) this is affected by maternity and long-term ill health absences together with the non-teaching roles of two of the senior staff. Thus, the adjusted number of staff available for HE teaching is 69 (60.2 FTE) with the appointment of a further full-time member of HE academic staff pending. Overall, the head count number of HE academic staff available in the College has risen 17 per cent from 2015-16 to 2016-17. The College

takes exclusive responsibility for the appointment of all these staff. The HE academic staff complement is made up of 65 per cent females and 35 per cent males, broadly reflecting the make-up of the student population of the College with 36 per cent of staff having completed less than two years of service with the College. Forty-five per cent of the staff are aged below 35 years of age.

103 The College's view that its HE academic staff members are well qualified has been endorsed by the Higher Education Review 2014. The evidence of the College's Recruitment and Selection Policy, its published generic job descriptions and person specifications and the specific requirements of each post, together with the general make up of selection panels, indicates a conscientious approach to the selection of appointees. However, for many appointments, with the exception of the Vice Principal (HE), the absence of independent external members of appointing panels constitutes a lost opportunity for externality and the demonstration of external comparability.

104 Analysis of the current staff profiles shows that 23 per cent of staff teaching HE are qualified to PhD level, 55 per cent to master's level, 18 per cent to honours degree level and four per cent are non-graduates and indicates therefore that staff in general have academic qualifications that are in line with their roles and the levels to which they teach in line with College requirements. Given the College's strategic priority of improving the academic and professional expertise of staff, the staff profiles also show that 11 staff members are currently pursuing studies for the award of PhD and nine for the award of master's. Further analysis of the staff profiles indicate that many of the part-time staff undertake complementary professional work of relevance to their duties in the College and that non-graduate staff members are restricted to an area where professional body approval and continuing professional registration based on professional qualifications and ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) is a requirement.

105 From its discussions with and observation of staff across a wide range of forums, the scrutiny team has noted that overall the staff are conscientious and enthusiastic showing high levels of commitment to their students and the institution, qualities that students also recognise. However, limitations exist which limit the capacity of the College to capitalise fully on these qualities. These include a noted adverse overall student/staff ratio in some but not all subject areas and the consequent high gearing of staff in relation to project supervision, academic tutoring and other academic duties; comparatively low salary ranges; staff workloads; the turnover of staff illustrated by the continuing high level of HE academic staff recruitment at all levels; and the vulnerabilities recognised by the College that are associated with small institutions where resilience is limited through the inevitable lack of depth in the staffing structure and the limited opportunities for succession planning. All of these matters are clearly recognised by the College as key issues and by students who have pointed to the consequences that staff departures/absences and high student/staff ratios can have on their academic experience. However, the recent increase in academic staff numbers for 2016-17 is clearly intended to address some of these issues directly.

106 Such limitations have led to some limited criticisms of the HE academic ethos existing in the College which are mentioned in external examiner reports, a departmental theme report and a recent periodic curriculum review report. Such views are consonant with the scrutiny team's observations (see paragraph 89). Two new external appointees (Sept/Oct 2016) to the senior team, with wide experience of HE should also help to ensure this imbalance is addressed further.

107 In the context of its future plan to follow the potential award of TDAP by an application for University Title, the College has more recently committed itself in the context of its HE Strategy to raising the minimum salary levels for academic appointees as of August 2016, to undertake a full staff structure review in 2017, to review its HE Student/Staff ratios

and has made an additional commitment to the staffing budget in general. In addition, the two senior appointments noted above further illustrate the commitment the College is making to the future delivery of its key strategic aims. The potential impact of these commitments and appointments remain, however, untried and represent, in the scrutiny team's view, a somewhat belated response to some long-standing issues.

108 The scrutiny team concludes that the HE staff of the College have relevant academic qualifications and generally have adequate levels of professional expertise sufficient to undertake their defined roles.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)**

109 The College, through its Institutional Membership (2012) of the HEA, its own HE Staff Development and CPD Policy and its Teaching Learning and Scholarship Strategy, confirms the expectation that staff should be engaged in this area. As such the College provides support to individuals in their membership of the HEA which across the staff is now 65 per cent. From analysis of the staff profiles it is clear that for those staff with at least two years' service with the College nearly all have a teaching qualification, including those who have completed a postgraduate certificate of education (HE) or its equivalent. Of the remainder most of those not already qualified are staff with less than two years' service who are actively engaged in pursuing a qualification, as required by College policy.

110 Analysis of the current staff profiles showed that 39 individuals belong to a subject association or a learned society with seven being members of both types of organisation, making an approximately two-thirds participation overall. The analysis revealed that the associations and societies and the professional bodies involved are all closely related to the particular subject-based interests of staff with little representation among non-subject-specific bodies either at national or international level. Although staff without programme responsibilities demonstrated clear professional subject-related community links they did not demonstrate strong links with the external HE academic community at large.

111 From the analysis of staff profiles it is apparent that although most of the College's staff may be said to present evidence of demonstrable engagement with the pedagogic development of their disciplines, this does not yet extend to all HE staff.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching**

112 The 2011 IQER and the 2014 Higher Education Review reports praised the College in this area for 'The strong institutional commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards' and 'The engagement of staff in research, scholarship and professional practice and the positive impact this has on the student experience', respectively. Despite this, the College considers that its performance in this regard is in need of improvement.

113 The College has claimed a long-standing focus on the development of research and scholarship since the inception of the AFB in 1997. However, measurable progress in this area has been relatively modest until recently, notwithstanding a range of supportive mechanisms that have been put in place over the period. These have included: the operation of a Scholarship Committee or its equivalent for over 15 years; the articulation of a Research Strategy including the appointment of research mentors and others with the responsibility for implementing research and scholarship priorities at subject level; a Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy that sets out a strategic direction for scholarship; regular reporting of

activity at departmental level with monitoring through the Scholarship Committee by AFB and the publication of specific advice in support of staff.

114 An analysis of the evidence put forward in the staff profiles provided indicates that among the staff, 15 per cent are able to provide only limited demonstrable evidence illustrating an active engagement with current research and scholarship. An adequate amount of evidence can be adduced for a further 35 per cent of staff and the remaining 50 per cent are able to clearly demonstrate such evidence. This analysis is based upon the self-reporting provided by staff in their profiles, together with College analyses and updates. The College has taken a positive view of the improvement in achievements in this area over the last three years. This conclusion appears also to have been reached by the Scholarship Committee and the AFB from the information that is presented to them. Notwithstanding the improvements, the threshold for inclusion of evidence of activity in the reporting process from departmental level is set at a low level, without any advice from the Committees relating to the necessary scale, quality and impact the included activities might need to achieve for their further consideration. The Committees do not discuss what is presented to them in these terms, perpetuating a possible lack of rigorous self-critical awareness among staff. The tendency to focus on the positive (see paragraph 91) is also found here. The reporting mechanism also allows prospective achievements to be reported thus leading to reiterative information being available at sequential Committee meetings thus making critical analysis more difficult both internally and externally.

115 The College's teaching observation process is designed to provide insight into the extent staff are implementing the five key principles of the Teaching and Learning Strategy that are based on the view that teaching should be firmly underpinned by research, scholarship and practice. The observation process is subject to monitoring and external review and in general finds that such a relationship exists. Additionally, the independent reviewer has raised only minor concerns relating to the limited use of scholarship in some teaching sessions.

116 In addition to their dissertation work, students are able to present their work at student-focused conferences held in each department, with the work presented by undergraduates being considered appropriate to level 6 study. Students may also attend research conferences and seminars where staff and external contributors present research findings. The sample seen by the scrutiny team offered some evidence of scholarship and the introduction of research outcomes to student attendees, but found that other events were less successful in acting as effective showcases for the link between scholarship and student learning. In general, however, students were positive in their comments relating to their perceptions of the use of research and scholarship in teaching.

117 A significant majority of HE staff are able to provide clear and relevant evidence of knowledge and understanding of current research and scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding could inform and enhance their teaching.

**All higher education teaching staff have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship**

118 The College in its Application indicates that it provides an extensive and strategically led staff development programme. The reports of the IQER, 2011 and the Higher Education Review, 2014 indicated that 'Staff development for higher education staff is well developed and highly effective' and that 'The strategic approach to staff development and advancement is facilitated through the extensive range of opportunities offered', respectively.

119 The activity is based on a thorough and clear set of opportunities and expectations, which are aligned with College strategy and underpinned by the College's Human Resources Strategy (2013), its HE-specific Staff Development and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Policy, and its Staff Development and Performance Appraisal Policy. Reports on activity are provided by the human resources section to the Executive and to the senior academic and governance bodies of the College. It is clear that, in particular, the HE Executive takes a strategic overview of the annual planning of CPD and seeks to ensure that the programme includes coverage of contemporary issues of importance to the College. It also monitors applications for the support of staff for other developmental activities, which it does generously, without, as yet, the imposition of a financial cap. Other parts of the committee system, including the Scholarship Committee; Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee; and DTWG can also be seen to influence the CPD provision of the College.

120 Attendance by staff at CPD events in the College is facilitated by a five-days-per-year allowance built into their workload allocations, illustrating the importance placed on this activity by the College, with many attendances seen as compulsory. Staff in general endorse the College's commitment to CPD and to the support of other forms of staff development, including obtaining academic and teaching qualifications, membership of external bodies, attendance at external events, and the provision of teaching remission for recognised developmental activities.

121 A review of materials supporting the CPD activities of the College provided the impression that many of the sessions were dominated by updating presentations, information delivery, and the dissemination of internal and external policy positions. The content often appeared basic and the intellectual challenge was apparently limited, with attendance being in some cases less than might be expected. As such, staff appear to have formed the perception that the sessions are 'top down'. The College has more recently sought to address this perception to foster debate and encourage staff participation and feedback.

122 In addition, staff are further supported in the development and enhancement of their professional competence and scholarship by the well-developed processes of staff induction, probation and ongoing appraisal, all of which are fully endorsed by staff. The induction programme is extensive and is underpinned by a clear timetable, a staff checklist and includes a workbook for the collection of evidence. The process, in common with other human resources-related matters are clearly described and supported by the thorough and extensive Staff Handbook. Similarly, appraisal is a thorough and supportive process, the operation of which is monitored by human resources and reported to the Executive, which is able to reward the achievement of individuals.

123 A more recent positive initiative taken by the College has been the introduction in February 2016 of a Hartpury Research Development Framework designed to help existing staff develop as researchers. This provides for a Hartpury Researcher Development Schedule, which combines internal, UWE and online resources into a programme of support. To date, attendance at the extensive range of sessions has been less than expected and it has been recognised that further steps to encourage engagement, particularly from staff who are not already active in research, need to be taken if this initiative is to produce the required impact. However, this initiative serves to complement other measures taken by the College that are designed to enhance the scholarship/research support to its staff. These include staff mentoring, writing retreats and the activities of visiting principal lecturers whose role is to encourage and support staff in their endeavours.

124 In general, it is clear that the College has in place, and is effectively operating, staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling HE academic staff to develop

and enhance their professional competence and scholarship. This activity is extensive and a positive feature of the College context. The opportunity for the activity to become more focused and relevant continues to be pursued by the College.

**Staff with key programme management responsibilities (for example, programme leaders and assessment coordinators) have relevant experience of curriculum development and assessment design**

125 Since the inception of the AFB in 1997, curriculum development and the design of programmes and their associated assessments has been the devolved responsibility of the College. Indeed, the College undertook a complete curriculum review between 2011 and 2014. There also continues to be an ongoing process of new programme development across the College subject to the oversight of AFB. From an analysis of the staff profiles it is clear that the majority of staff currently in post and all of those with programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design. It also may be noted that much of the experience has been accumulated from activity within the College, with the majority of staff not having experience derived from work with or for other higher education institutions.

**Staff with key programme management responsibilities have relevant engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)**

126 The College indicates in its CSA that a number of staff members have relevant engagement with other HE providers and that benchmarking is facilitated through attendance at meetings held by QAA, the HEA, the Association of University Administrators and other bodies. It also provides a small number of examples where College representatives have been part of a QAA steering group, a National Pilot study and a QAA subject benchmarking working group.

127 An analysis of the staff profiles provided indicates that at the end of 2014, 24 members of staff (30 per cent) have acted or are currently acting as external examiners. By October 2016, 25 members of HE academic staff (some 30 per cent) have at some time acted as validation panel members for other institutions, with six (eight per cent) who have acted as external reviewers.

128 In order to facilitate engagement with such activities by its staff the College builds an allowance into its workload model to accommodate it, and is seeking to encourage greater levels of engagement. Although engagement could be more clearly demonstrated and expanded, it is clear that for those with programme management responsibilities they have some relevant engagement with the activities of providers of HE in other organisations, most of which are of equivalent or similar standing to the College.

## **D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes**

### **Criterion D1**

The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

### **The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes**

129 As the College set out, the IQER in 2011, the Higher Education Review in 2014 and the views of its external examiners have endorsed the effectiveness of its learning and teaching activities and their monitoring in relation to their stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes. From this, and the evidence elsewhere in this report, the scrutiny team saw that the College's academic monitoring processes, as demonstrated in its Quality Cycle covering approval, monitoring and review policies and procedures, form a further basis for the demonstration of this effectiveness.

130 In addition, the teaching observation processes contribute significantly to this assurance. The policy in this area defines a thorough and well-supported developmental set of processes, including developmental peer support for new HE teaching staff, buddy teaching observations and formal peer (graded) teaching observations, the feedback from which informs the staff appraisal process. The outcomes of the latter process, in particular, are collected in summary reports that are considered by the LTEC, AFB and QuEst. The reports, although generalised in nature, help maintain the profile of the process, which is also subject to external scrutiny. The constructive comments arising from this latter are also included in the reporting to the relevant committees.

131 Overall, the College has in place effective mechanisms for the monitoring of learning and teaching, which allow it and others to assure themselves on their effectiveness and to monitor their contribution to the achievement of the College's stated academic objectives and learning outcomes.

### **Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner**

132 The provision of the outcomes of assessment to students is subject to clear expectations set out at policy and operation levels for both staff and students in published College documents, including its Assessment Guidance, Staff Handbook, programme handbooks and specific advice documents, including 'How to find and understand your assessment results'.

133 Students are made aware of fixed-time examination outcomes online following verification and approval by the relevant Field or Award Board where arrangements for such postings are agreed. The means whereby students can access their assessment outcomes online are currently being incorporated into the student information management system implementation, which is replacing that previously provided by the University. For such outcomes feedback discussion with students takes place with staff though the tutorial system or with student advisers. For all forms of assessment there is an ongoing commitment to a 20-working-day turnaround on assessment feedback, with submission dates and feedback dates being published to students.



134 Administratively, the College operates an information collection protocol, which allows close monitoring of its performance against the stated deadlines. This provides for regular update reports to the HE Executive and for the performance to be incorporated into summary reports presented to the ASQC. From such reports it is clear that the provision of outcomes and feedback generally occurs in a timely manner. There are, however, blemishes on the record, with, for example, a particular semester assessment feedback turnaround report in early 2016 indicating that out of the 37 assessments across the College feedback was late in 16 per cent of cases, with some areas of the College performing better than others. Students find the provision and turnaround times for assessment results and feedback to be generally acceptable.

135 Timely reports on feedback performance are also received and considered by departmental committee meetings, allowing them to assess any need for change and to consider the related views of students on the matter. From the latter and from the views of students collected through other College processes it may be concluded that staff and the College are conscientious in their provision of the outcomes of assessment to students and that this is complemented by timely and extensive feedback on performance.

### **Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance**

136 The College seeks to promote a wide range of mechanisms designed to ensure that students are given constructive and developmental feedback on their ongoing performance. These include systematised comments on marked work, examination feedback sessions, assignment feedback sessions, tutorials, formative feedback on assessment drafts, study skills support material and, prospectively, the use of a feedback portfolio. From the Staff Handbook coverage of the topic, and its consideration in CPD sessions, it is clear that the College is continuing to emphasise to staff the priority it places on its performance in this area and the contribution it can make to student satisfaction levels. To this end the College has undertaken a thorough thematic review of student feedback, the report on which was considered by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. The Committee considered the outcomes and approved the proposed evolutionary changes, which were strongly influenced by the views of students collected during the review.

137 Students recognise that, in addition to the formally defined routes through which they receive developmental feedback, which they fully endorse, the enthusiastic staff give them personalised attention and that this informal context for feedback contributes significantly to their academic development. The excellent level of knowledge staff exhibit of their students collectively and individually, and the active, constructive and developmental support they provide both formally and informally, is often praised by external examiners in their comments to the College. Indeed, the commitment of staff to the provision of comprehensive feedback on assessments and the operation of the Independent Verification process, which provides for the monitoring and augmentation of such feedback, is sometimes considered, although laudable, as potentially over-burdensome in relation to the efficient and effective use of staff time by some external examiners, with the extensive attention given to it not fully reflected in the views expressed via the NSS.

138 In general, students provide a positive endorsement of both the amount and quality of the constructive and developmental feedback they receive as individuals and as a body.

139 It can be concluded that the College makes considerable effort to ensure that students are provided with developmental and constructive feedback on their performance.

**Feedback from students, staff and (where possible) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies**

140 The 'varied and highly effective mechanisms used to engage students' were identified in the 2014 Higher Education Review as an area of good practice, and found to be a strong feature of the College by the University. Such mechanisms may be seen currently to include a range of student surveys, student representatives and their meetings with staff, student membership of College committees, involvement in academic procedures (for example Periodic Curriculum Review) and an emergent Students' Union.

141 Student surveys include those focusing on induction, service provision, modules, programmes and broader student experience, including NSS and on-programme surveys for those not eligible for inclusion in the NSS. The outcomes of such surveys are considered, often repeatedly, at a variety of College bodies including the ASQC, College Executive, QuEst and AFB. Such survey information is also considered at departmental level, and incorporated into Annual Monitoring and Periodic Curriculum Review and their respective reporting.

142 Student survey information is also available to external examiners in the module files they receive, thus demonstrating an openness about the results, which, from the proceedings of the exemplar bodies listed above, are given careful but not necessarily overly self-critical consideration. The depth of survey analysis is generally adequate but in a few cases is compromised by low participation rates, although longitudinal data is sometimes reviewed. Participation rates, however, are receiving attention, with both operational and information dissemination contributing to growth. Broadly, most survey data considered by the College appears to have shown improving outcomes, with comparable data such as that arising from NSS now showing outcomes generally comparable with national norms.

143 Student representatives are a further clear mechanism through which students provide feedback on many aspects of their experience. Representatives endorse the effectiveness of the role they are given, and the training they receive, and provided examples of where amendment had occurred arising from student comment. Their opportunity to meet as a group as the Student Forum provides for cross-cutting issues to be identified. Student representatives are also important members of the committee structures operating in departments, with the interface between the student consultative bodies and the departmental committee meetings being recently and beneficially simplified and made more direct, with students fully endorsing the effectiveness of the processes involved, including the feedback that arises from them. Student membership of a wide range of College and departmental committees, and their consideration of important academic processes that rely on student feedback, for example Annual Monitoring, has become a feature of the feedback opportunities open to students of the College. Although in some instances attendance at College committees has not been high, the confidence and effectiveness of the Students' Union Officers has grown more recently. The College Students' Union has recently taken over the student representation system from the University's students' union, and although this is now operational the College Students' Union remains at an early stage of its constitutional makeup and in its support for students beyond clubs and societies. As yet, the College Students' Union has attracted only relatively low levels of support from students in the NSS (for example NSS 2016).

144 College staff also endorse the range and effectiveness of the feedback mechanisms available to them, which include biennial staff surveys, staff membership of a wide range of academic and governance committees, departmental meetings with the Principal, feedback sessions, and a Staff Forum, which meets four times per annum and which produces a staff newsletter. However, as a key mechanism for the formal collection of staff views it is notable

that the response rate from staff to the staff survey has until recently been relatively modest, with the most recent response rate showing a 19 per cent improvement (52 per cent in 2016, 33 per cent in 2014, and 40 per cent in 2012).

145 All these routes for staff feedback are fully endorsed by the Principal, and the Executive plays a key role in monitoring the operation of the mechanisms and in the discussion of their outcomes. Staff involved in the provision of services in the College are also fully engaged with these mechanisms; they identified examples of developments that have involved close cross-College dialogue in support of major improvements (for example, the Student Zone concept and implementation).

146 The report of the 2014 Higher Education Review endorsed the involvement of employers and their feedback in the College's curriculum design and development processes, which provide specific provision for this involvement. It is also clear that feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including employers, has an impact on the approval considerations for new academic provision. Employer representatives also endorsed the good routes of communication they have with the College, and the formal and informal input they have into curriculum design and other operations in the College.

147 Overall, the feedback mechanisms available to students, staff and others are sound, and appear to operate effectively to bring about good communications between the parties and to support ongoing improvements.

### **Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs**

148 Within the context of its Student Charter and its Public Information Policy the College provides prospective and enrolled students with clear and comprehensive information on their programmes of study. Importantly, this includes individual prospectuses for each of the key subject areas and programme handbooks that are presented in line with a College template and which are both helpful and student focused. These documents also contain or refer to other key information including, for example, assessment briefs, the Study Skills Handbook, programme specifications and module descriptions. The quality of this information, available both in documentary and electronic form is good, with, for example, the prospectuses being described in the Higher Education Review report as 'clear, extremely well designed and a valuable tool for prospective students'. This information is provided in a timely manner for both continuing students and new entrants, particularly now that the College has become solely responsible for admissions. Students also endorsed the web-based information and described the information they receive in general as accurate and clear, with programme and modules guides considered particularly good.

149 In addition to a Welcome Week programme consisting of a number of introductory activities relating to College life and the services available to them, new students are provided with an academic induction designed by programme managers using a staff guide to induction. The process for all students is continued through module delivery and tutorial interaction. The experience of students relating to induction is the subject of a specific survey.

150 Students with specific needs are encouraged to declare their requirements to a dedicated Learning Support Coordinator, who supports the development of learning support plans through one-to-one meetings. Some 12 per cent of students have been in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), with a somewhat greater proportion accessing relevant services, the uptake of which is closely monitored. The Widening Participation and Access Group monitors disability support services and resources, which respond to external shifts such as the 2016-17 changes in DSA. The Group produces an annual report that analyses

recruitment, intake, retention and achievement, which reveals some minor differences between student groups and the actions that are consequentially required.

151 The College's International Office provides support to international students during the application process, with specific communications, personal contact during induction, and introduction to international student mentors for new entrants. Students are provided with access to a range of specific documentation and introductory sessions to help support their learning, with the effectiveness of such overall support reviewed annually and a report prepared and considered.

152 There is sufficient supportive evidence available to show that students are advised about and inducted into their study programmes in an effective way, and that account is taken of different student needs.

### **Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes**

153 Broadly, the College operates to support the adequacy of learning resource materials on the basis that the AFB, advised by the ASEC, makes the key academic decisions on requirements - based on its programme design, planning and approval processes, together with its academic monitoring and review procedures - and the Senior Management Team (formerly the Principal's Management Group) makes decisions on the resourcing matters arising therefrom, both through the annual budgetary cycle and in response to in-year variations. This relationship is clearly demonstrated by the inclusion of resourcing matters as standing items, not only for the meetings of the Executive groups of the College but also for the meetings that take place at departmental level, and by the resourcing matters raised by service areas through their action plans and reports. As such, the commitments of the HE Strategy to continue investment in facilities and infrastructure can be seen to be real, with the necessary adjustments and opportunities offered by the changing relationship with the University being fully addressed.

154 Thus, support infrastructure such as the VLE continues to develop beneficially, fully supported by resources including the necessary personnel, with its utility being endorsed by users and its content subject to regular review. Library development also illustrates this coordinated approach to ensuring learning materials and infrastructure remain in line with student learning needs, as the College's academic provision and external relationship continue to change.

155 Students are generally positive about the range of materials and resources available to them, commenting in particular on the IT, 24-hour library access, library searches, Wi-Fi, computer availability and practical facilities. Processes such as Periodic Curriculum Review provide external support for the adequacy of resources, material and infrastructure available in support of learning. It is clear that the monitoring in this area is conscientious and occurs within the context of an Estate, Places and Infrastructure Plan and Operation Plan (May 2015), which receives scrutiny from HE Executive and which seeks to ensure that overall planning remains in line with strategic priorities, including those encapsulated in the Learning, Teaching and Scholarship Strategy. This and other monitoring and survey information ensures that teaching materials and other infrastructure essential to student learning remain adequate, and that early warning is provided when such requirements are reaching their maximum capacity - although space utilisation data is still to be produced.

156 The scrutiny team found that learning support materials are sufficient to support students in their achievement in the stated purposes of their study programmes.

**The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered**

157 The College has in place a full range of advisory and counselling services for students, including a Chaplaincy, Student Experience Officer, 24-hour warden team, and a Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team made up of a manager, three nurses and two accredited counsellors. This is augmented by the services of the Innovation Careers and Enterprise Centre (ICE), which coordinates liaison with industry for staff and students and provides advice on careers and employability for students through a careers adviser. There are also student advisers, usually recent graduates, who can act as first contact for all queries, concerns or problems and help students to interface with other staff to facilitate resolution. The responsiveness of the College to the views of students with respect to such services is illustrated by the recent developments in the careers advisory service, for which the College has now taken over sole responsibility. This was previously an area of significant concern to students, who now find the Hartpury College provision to be not only improved and centralised but also beneficially available to graduates for up to two years following graduation. This also illustrates the responsiveness of the previously described resourcing system allowing such improvements to be made possible when opportunities arise.

158 The effectiveness of the advisory counselling and related services is monitored, with input from student surveys and student representatives, through consideration of the reported outcomes at both academic and governance committees. This ensures that not only is the impact of services on the academic achievements of all groups of students made clear but also that the effectiveness of services and their resource needs are fully incorporated into the broader resource decision-making within the College.

159 In relation to staff the College has a long-standing Investors in People award; human resources provides a support and wellbeing section for staff online. The College also subscribes to the Independent Counselling and Advisory Service (ICAS) and provides access to its ICAS Xtra portal. These facilities, together with the support offered through induction, appraisal and the Staff Handbook, are available to all HE staff, and their use and outcomes remain confidential.

160 Overall, the advisory and counselling services for students and staff are adequately resourced; their activity is fully monitored and their effective and continuing contribution assured.

**Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs**

161 The College is currently engaged in a transition project whereby its information systems are being substituted in order to facilitate the introduction of College capability, replacing a previous reliance on University provision. This project is ongoing and is being closely monitored by the DTWG. The core of the new in-house capability is a new Student Information Management System (SMIS), which has a target implementation date of September 2016. Various components of the system were implemented earlier either as a pilot or, as with admissions from 2015, are in full use.

162 In terms of the systems currently in place, where the data input, accuracy assurance and data reporting are already College responsibilities, there is clear evidence from the proceedings of the relevant award and field boards, and those of departmental committee meetings, that the performance of verified students and their progression is adequately provided for from the current data sources, and that the information is presented clearly and in a useful form. Although previously external examiners have noted that data

derived from the University system could be inaccurate it is clear that such difficulties have now been overcome.

163 Other academic data reports are produced in order to support the considerations of a variety of committees and groups. These include: inter alia, admissions, student count, student details, student equality and diversity impacts, and retention. In most cases the data as presented achieves a level of resolution, which is adequate for most of the immediate purposes, however, analysis can remain at a basic level. Other non-academic management information needs appear well served by the administrative systems in, for example, the financial, staffing and human resources areas.

164 Overall, the administrative support systems provide the necessary information accurately and in a timely way, providing an appropriate context for student monitoring and other academic and non-academic functions. The transition to new capabilities is being managed carefully.

### **Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters**

165 While preferring informal means of resolution, the College has in place well-presented, formal mechanisms in order to deal with complaints from students and prospective students, with the ultimate stage of consideration - including reference to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) - currently remaining with the University. The 2014 Higher Education Review report attested to the appropriate nature of the system, with students being well aware and staff being appropriately trained to support it. Students are made aware of the system and arrangements for academic appeals through a range of routes, including online advice, programme handbooks and the Student Diary and Survival Guide issued at induction. These and other sources of advice such as tutors and student advisers are clearly recognised by students. Staff are advised through the Staff Handbook and via a compulsory CPD day held prior to session about their responsibilities in this area.

166 An Annual Review of Complaints and Appeals is presented to the AFB together with data from the previous three years. The most recent committee meeting noted that in the year to May 2016 only three formal complaints had been pursued. In addition, the DTWG noted that with the increase in responsibility for this area now falling on the College, a Students Concerns Officer had been appointed. Other College committees also receive and consider reports on specific areas of potential concern across the student body, with the one per cent incidence of bullying among HE students during the academic year 2014-15, and the interview process that had been used to deal with the issues, being considered.

167 The College has in place the necessary confidential mechanisms to deal with complaints on academic and non-academic matters.

### **Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development**

168 The delivery on its commitments to professional development for its staff made by the College in its HE Strategy - induction, probation, appraisal documentation and its Staff Development and CPD Policy - is confirmed by the support staff concerned, including access to the necessary resources and time both for compulsory and elective activity. Professional development for such staff also continues to derive from the College's ongoing relationship with the University.

169 In line with its overall aim, the appraisal system for non-academic staff is geared to supportive development through its identification of training and CPD needs. In addition,

training can be built around the needs of key College implementations such as the Student Management Information System or legislative change, with the needs being carefully managed to ensure that smooth transitional activity occurs.

170 The HE Executive has emphasised the importance of this matter at the recent Corporate Strategic Planning Day when they indicated that development was underway of a support staff-specific package of available CPD and HEA membership opportunities for implementation in 2017. In addition, the CSA illustrates the range of staff activities undertaken in the recent past.

171 In general, the staff involved in supporting the delivery of the College's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development.

### **Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete**

172 The 2014 Higher Education Review report confirmed that the College's procedures in this area aligned with the Quality Code, Part C, with the respective responsibilities of the College and the University being encapsulated in the Academic Agreement between them. The College's position is delivered within the context of its Policy/Procedure for the Approval of Public Information, which identifies the approval processes and the responsibilities of the stakeholders involved. The processes, as summarised in the CSA, are thorough and clear, and relate both to hard copy and online information materials. Staff are advised on the processes through the Staff Handbook.

173 The policy and procedures are subject to regular monitoring, with College Executive taking an overview of this and of the College's website. In discussions with students the scrutiny team noted that the published information concerning the College's education provision, from the level of, for example, prospectus to module guides, was accurate, complete and gave a fair representation of the experience offered and its delivery.

174 The scrutiny team concluded that the information the College publishes in relation to its higher education provision is accurate and complete. The College is conscientious in ensuring that this remains the case.

### **Equality of opportunity is sought and achieved in the organisation's activities**

175 The College has in place a full range of contextual policy documentation, including an Equality and Diversity Policy, a set of Equality and Diversity Objectives 2013-16, a Single Equality Action Plan, and a Single Equality Scheme, which underpin and inform a range of other relevant policy statements such as the College Recruitment and Selection Policy, an Age Equality Policy, the HE Admissions Policy and Process, and a Public Disclosure Procedure-Whistle Blowing Policy. In addition, the College has held the Investors in People equality standard for the past 12 years.

176 Reporting in the relevant areas is monitored by specific formal groups and overseen by the senior academic and governance committees of the College. For example, admissions are considered by the Widening Participation, Access and Admissions Group, reported to the Equality and Diversity Forum, before the information passes to the HE Executive and LTEC before being reported annually to AFB and the Corporation.

177 Central to these considerations is the work of the Equality and Diversity Forum and its biennial reports to the Corporation on its development of strategies and monitoring of the effectiveness of implementation of the range of College's equality and diversity-related policies. Other bodies also consider the Equality and Diversity Report to the Corporation, and equality and diversity in the form of a standing item is a feature of a number of other

groups/committees. All these opportunities ensure that equality and diversity remains a consideration in many contexts.

178 Academic staff and support staff receive compulsory equality and diversity training as part of the CPD programme and are supported through information on the Staff Intranet and in the Staff Handbook. Students are made aware of College policy via the Student Charter and during induction, with support material being available to them on the Student Intranet. Recently, a student-focused Equality and Diversity Week has been instituted by the Students' Union in which a range of relevant issues are addressed and which it is intended will become an annual event.

179 Although the student and staff populations of the College do not display a wide range of diversity the College policies and its supportive activities intend to create a context within which change is encouraged. In this context, from 2016-17 the College has put in place the post of Head of Inclusivity, currently occupied by a previous head of department.

180 The operation of student centred bodies such as field/award boards and extenuating circumstances panels indicate that sensitive treatment of all individual cases is pursued with consistency and fairness assured.

181 The scrutiny team concluded that equality of opportunity is sought and achieved in the College's activities and operations.



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